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MARCH/APRIL 2016

Anti-gay Measures in Play

ANALYSIS:

PA Poised for Action While Nation Faces 107 Anti-gay Bills

By Frank Pizzoli

On February 9, when Gov. Tom Wolf gave his formal budget address before the legislature he said we need to provide "economic opportunity for all" by protecting LGBT people from discrimination in housing, employment, and business and government services. Multiple polls indicate an overwhelming majority of Pennsylvanians support ending legal discrimination against gay people. The legislature has until the end of the year to pass the PA Fairness Act.

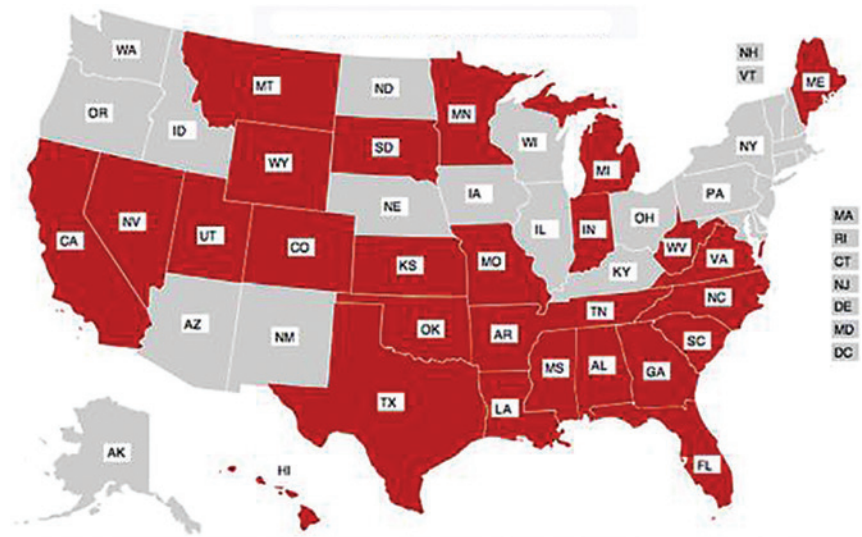
Nationwide there are 107 anti-gay measures in play in state legislatures across the country.

Pennsylvania stands in contrast to those states.

Measures nationwide cover religious freedom restoration acts, marriage-related religious exemption laws; first amendment defense acts, government employees, commercial wedding services, pastor protection acts, adoption and foster care, college and university student groups, and access to health services, according to the American Civil Liberties Union.

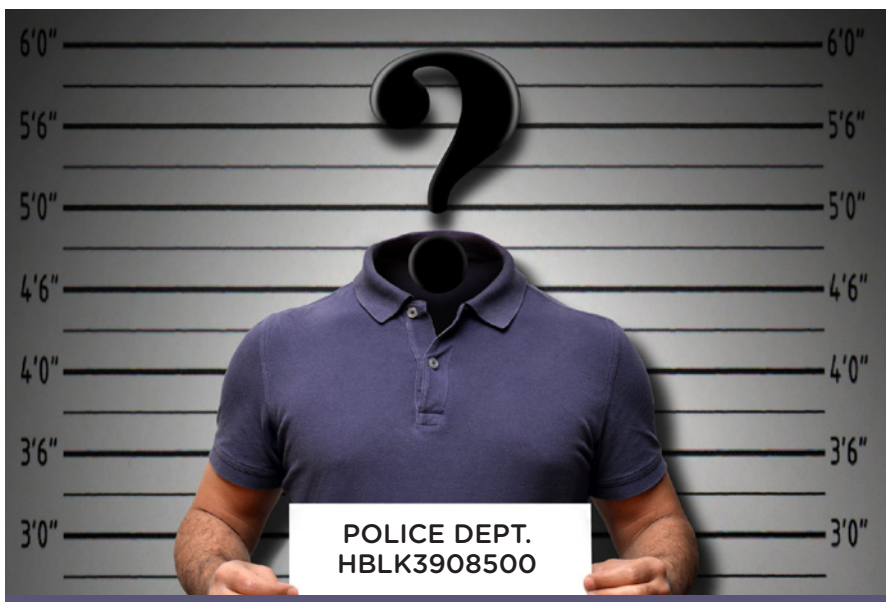
Resonating with author Michael Signorile's book title - *It's Not Over* - the national landscape is a political dart board with 107 anti-gay measures in play.

Continued on page 24



Shows Anti-LGBT Religious Refusals Legislation Across the Country

Downstream Consequences



A criminal record can make it more difficult to get a job or rent an apartment. Getting the record expunged can be a daunting task.

By Frank Pizzoli

To "expunge" means to erase something. Like your criminal record.

Erasing your criminal record is a daunting task made easier on February 16 when Governor Tom Wolf signed Senate Bill 166 into law.

Twenty-seven states allow some misdemeanor and even felony convictions to be expunged or sealed. Pennsylvania's new law allows certain criminal records to be sealed, meaning that law enforcement and state licensing agencies will continue to have access to those records – but those records will no longer be an impediment for employment or housing.

One local woman courageous enough to come forward explains why the new law is needed.

"Every time I apply for a job I certainly want to be honest and report that I was charged with simple

Continued on page 25

▸ **Local Churn the Bern** pg 7

▸ **Medicare For All" Means What?** pg 6

PA ATTENDEE REPORTS BACK

Creating Change by Protesting Dialogue?

By Frank Pizzoli

Commentary by community voices on pages 4 & 5

In *Gayland* there is an annual conference known as Creating Change held most recently in Chicago last January. Think of it as an activist's Mecca. Change in Mecca can be slow. Dialogue thwarted.

Allentown-based advocate and activist Adrian Shanker, Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center executive director was there.

Shanker's been at the apex of many memorable moments. Like speaking at the 50th anniversary of Martin

Continued on page 25

The Wood's Edge
Green Burial

PAXTANG CEMETERY
ESTABLISHED 1898

We, at Paxtang Cemetery encourage others to think about going with native plants when planning their flower beds this spring. There are many reasons for an individual to go for native plants instead of exotic one. First of all, plants which were in Harrisburg before the Europeans arrived evolved here & are precisely adapt to Pennsylvania's climate & soil. This means you won't have to do much for them to grow into beautiful, healthy plants. Another good argument for growing natives is it preserves the region's rich biodiversity. There are many beautiful species which are native to Harrisburg & it's important to protect them. Exotic plants, on the other h&, often spread in an unpredictable fashion, creating an imbalance in the ecosystem. Here are some great natives to try this spring.

Turtlehead

Turtlehead is also known as shellflower, snakemouth, cod head & balmony. It's name comes from the fact its flower resembles the head of a turtle. This native pale-pink wildflower is a beautiful perennial & requires very little maintenance to keep - especially here in the area where it's adapted to live. Turtleheads have a mature height of up to three feet & a spread of one foot. If you can, plant them in a moist region, although they can grow in dry soil too. Make sure it has a soil pH that's neutral & either in part shade or full sun.

Columbine

Columbine is a very short-lived plant. It only lasts for two to three years. However, it self-seeds prolifically enough to persist in your garden. Its unique bell-shaped, spurred flowers can be of a variety of colors from light pastels to bright yellow, red or purple. It blooms somewhere from mid-spring to the beginning of the summer. This plants grow best in fertile, well-drained soil & full sun or partial shade. Plant them in spring, spacing them about 2 feet apart. Columbine is prone to powdery mildew so if they get the disease, cut back the affected parts as much as necessary & provide them with afternoon sunshine & air circulation.

Butterfly Weed

With its long bloom time & beautiful orange flowers, butterfly weed is a great perennial to have in your garden. It can grow from one to three feet tall & two to three feet wide. If started early, the plant can bloom late in the first year. The plant gets its name from the fact that it attracts butterflies. Monarchs often lay eggs on them, which seldom harms them. Although it's called butterfly weed, it also attracts other small animals such as hummingbirds, as well as bees & other types of insects. Make sure not to overwater your butterfly weed since it does better in a dry environment & in a area which is exposed to full sun.

Beardtongue Also known as penstemons, these herbaceous perennials are an excellent native choice. They have spikes of tubular flowers & lance shaped foliage. When planting beardtongues, make sure they aren't too close to other plants. They don't do well in competition with other species. Most beardtongues are 1 – 3 feet tall, but some varieties can reach up to six feet of height. They can have various different colors, too, such as red, pink, white & purple or in rare cases, yellow. Penstemons do best in full sun & in soil that drains well.

With so many reasons to grow native plants in your garden, & so many beautiful, low maintenance species to choose from, it's easy to make a good choice for the area's environment & ecosystem. Follow the advice above & you'll soon have a breathtaking sustainable garden with plants that belong there. **Come join us on June 25 for our Native Garden Show at 10AM**, where gardeners are invited to demonstrate & compete for the best Native Garden. If you would like **to apply to be one of these competitors** please contact our office at (717)564-2110. There will also be speakers, pruning classes, vendors & more.

~Jonathan Leger is a member of the Garden Writer's Association & a gardening enthusiast. Check out his website where he shares his passion.
"http://www.uniqueplants.net

Political Update

INTERNATIONAL

• Slovenian Voters Repeal Marriage Equality

In late December 2015, more than 60% of ballots cast in Slovenia supported repeal of the country's marriage equality law enacted in March reports *Buzzfeed's* J. Lester Feder and David Mack. Slovenia is a former Yugoslavian republic. This gives repeal voters enough ballots to make the vote binding under the country's election laws. A number of nearby countries have passed bans on marriage equality in recent years, including neighboring Croatia. Janez Janša, a former Slovenian prime minister who leads the conservative Slovenian Democratic Party, says that the result was a victory for the "voices of reason" and the country's children.

• Greece Recognizes Same-sex 'Partnerships'

The 26th European nation to do so, Greek parliamentarians approved a new civil partnership bill which legally recognizes same-sex couples. The concept of registered partnership has existed in Greece since 2009 but was only available to heterosexual partners which was declared discriminatory by the European Court of Human Rights.

• India's Court Revisits Homosexuality Ruling

India's Supreme Court has scheduled a new hearing in the challenge to the country's law criminalizing homosexuality. Nearly 600 people were reportedly arrested under the provision in the year after it came back into effect, according to statistics from India's Home Ministry.

• Cubans Launch Marriage Campaign

With a 6-month petition campaign called "We Also Love" Cuban advocates are hoping lawmakers will extend marriage to include same-sex couples. The advocates are working independently of Mariela Castro, daughter of Cuban President Raúl Castro, who addresses LGBT issues on the Communist island. In 1979, Cuba repealed its sodomy law and in 2008 began offering free sex-reassignment surgery under its national health care system, but independent advocates maintain only a few dozen transgender Cubans have been able to undergo the procedure.

• Six Tunisian Students Sentenced

A Tunisian court has sentenced a group of students who allegedly engaged in same-sex sexual relations to three years in prison reports Michael K. Lavers, Washington Blade. Police arrested the students in a house after a neighbor complained to the police.

• Taiwan Elects First Female President

Tsai Ing-wen has been elected Taiwan's first female president. Ms Tsai, 59, leads the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) that wants independence from China. Last October, when the biggest gay pride parade in Asia was held in Taipei, Tsai expressed her support for same-sex marriage in a 15-second video saying "I am Tsai Ing-wen, and I support marriage equality" and "Let everyone be able to freely love and pursue happiness".

NATIONAL

• Takes One to Know One

Like we used to say back when: Takes one to know one. Adrian Wojnarowski, *Yahoo Sports*, reports that 18-year NBA referee Bill Kennedy has revealed he is gay after Rajon Rondo made a gay slur to him. Kennedy's announcement comes in the wake of the NBA's suspension of Sacramento Kings guard Rondo, who game officials, including Kennedy, heard unleash a disturbing torrent of anti-gay slurs following his ejection from a game. "I am proud to be an NBA referee and I am proud to be a gay man," Kennedy told Yahoo Sports. "I wholeheartedly support Bill's decision to live his life proudly and openly," said NBA commissioner Adam Silver.

• Missouri Lawmakers in Alley Fistfight

Missouri lawmaker, Rep. Courtney Allen Curtis, said a dispute over right-to-work legislation during a union event led to an alley fistfight that prompting him to seek a restraining order against Rep. Michael Butler. Curtis alleges Butler verbally confronted him during an AFL-CIO reception because Curtis last year supported a right-to-work bill limiting union powers.

• Hip-hop Vet Comes Out

Rap veteran Keith Murray, part of the rap collective Def Squad, called in New York's hip-hop station HOT 97 to announce that he had big news to share, and that the announcement is bigger "than Frank Ocean and Caitlyn Jenner." Frank Ocean, who previously came out as gay, was the first popular hip-hop soul singer to do so. Caitlyn Jenner has transitioned from being Bruce Jenner. Murray came out of his gay closet with his announcement.

• GOP Rep. Invited Davis to State of the Union

Arrested, anti-gay marriage martyr Kentucky County Clerk Kim Davis attended President Barack Obama's Jan. 11 State of the Union address as the guest of Rep. Jim Jordan (R-Ohio). Amid confusion on which member of Congress invited Davis to the address, initially Jordon insisted he didn't invite anyone. When pressed on whether he had given his ticket to the Family Research Council, which then gave it to Davis "I don't know," he said. After confirming with his communications director, he said, "Yeah, so we gave a ticket to - at the request of the Family Research Council - we gave the ticket to Kim Davis' family. I found out today," Jordan said.

• NJ 1 Vote Short on Trans Vote

The New Jersey State Senate recently came up one vote shy of overriding Gov. Chris Christie's veto of a bill that would have streamlined the process for transgender people to make their IDs consistent with their gender identity.

• Lawmakers Intro Religious Freedom Bills

Lawmakers in Virginia and Maryland recently introduced bills allowing officials to refuse issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples because doing so conflicts with their religious beliefs. Virginia state Sen. Charles Carrico, above, introduced Senate Bills 40 and 41. Maryland state Del. Richard Metzgar introduced House Bill 16. Irma Palmer, a spokesperson for Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe told the *Washington Blade* that the Democrat would veto both of Carrico's bills if they were to reach his desk.

• Republican Senator Co-Sponsors Equality Act

U.S. Sen. Mark Kirk of Illinois told *BuzzFeed News* that discrimination on the basis of being gay is illegal in his state "and should be against the law nationwide." He became became the first U.S. Republican senator to co-sponsor the Equality Act last January, turning the LGBT anti-discrimination bill into a bipartisan effort in both chambers of Congress.

• WA Group Invokes Children's Safety

Only one month old, Washington State's new gender-neutral bathroom law is being challenged. One passionate challenger said she knows she lives in a bubble. "I know one transgender person," but she knows a threat when she sees one, which is why she, along with other members of Keep Locker Rooms Safe (KLRS), are calling for the repeal of Washington's new law. The law allows use of restrooms, locker rooms, dressing rooms, and homeless and emergency shelters to correspond with the users' gender expressions and gender identities.

• Judge Objects to Same-sex Marriage

American Samoa's new District Court Judge says he will not perform same sex marriage weddings unless local laws are changed. The territory's former attorney general, Fiti Alexander Sunia, was unanimously confirmed by the American Samoa Senate.

• HRC Endorses HRC

The Human Rights Campaign is endorsing Hillary Rodham Clinton for President. HRC's Board of Directors unanimously voted to endorse Secretary Clinton. HRC President Chad Griffin said, "All the progress we have made as a nation on LGBT equality - and all the progress we have yet to make - is at stake in November. In most states, LGBT people are still at risk of being fired, evicted or denied services simply because of who they are," referring to the fact that there is no federal LGBT civil rights protection law.

• Republican Dold Equality Act Co-sponsor

Freshman member of Congress from Illinois Rep. Bob Dold is the first Republican co-sponsor of comprehensive LGBT non-discrimination legislation known as the Equality Act. "Illinois has a long and proud history of fighting for equal rights, and I am proud to continue this tradition by supporting the Equality Act," Dold said.

Continued on page 11

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voice box

GORGEOUS

WOW! What a gorgeous paper! Its so well done and put together beautifully!!

- Danny Pintauro
Pintauro, the subject of a cover story, Jan-Feb 2016, is best known for his role as Jonathan Bower on the popular American sitcom Who's the Boss?

GREAT

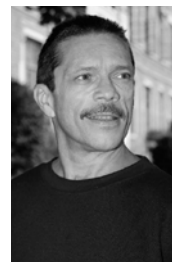
Thank you *Central Voice*. This is great. Cartoon in Jan-Feb 2016 issue is pretty, perfect and accurate...(upon e-blasting readers on Equality PA's Opinion piece on Pennsylvania not yet having an LGBT anti-discrimination law).

- Ted Martin, executive director, Equality Pennsylvania

E-mail your thoughts to posops@aol.com

publisher's voice

US Senate Candidate Sestak My Kind of Guy


Frank Pizzoli

"I am starting with…the advantage of having the entire political establishment against me once again," Joe Sestak said to supporters. He's running in the Pennsylvania Primary Election (April 26) for the US Senate. The primary winner will go up against incumbent Republican Sen. Pat Toomey described as "vulnerable" by observers.

In 2010, when Sestak ran in a primary election for a Senate seat, he had a 97% favorable rating from the Human Rights Campaign. While running, he called for repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell (an original co-sponsor) in that year's Defense Authorization Bill. He also supported repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act (also original co-sponsor). He's familiar with LGBT issues in the military first hand - Sestak is a former three-star Vice Admiral. Openly gay Lt. Dan Choi endorsed him at the time.

Sestak tells *Central Voice,* "In my 31-year career in the U S Navy, I served alongside many LGBT Americans who were all committed to defending our nation. I had the fortune to lead and serve under some of these fine men and women who simply wanted to get the job done. They would have died for me, and I for them."

When Sestak visited the region in 2010, including Central PA Pride Festival, he was three-dimensional and - most importantly - he did not present like "It's all about me". As we made our way through the crowd, he actually wanted to hear from those he greeted. Service to constituents - he rang up 18,000 constituent encounters while in Congress.

"I support basic civil rights for LGBT citizens because we have not done nearly enough when LGBT Americans are still hesitant to put pictures of their partners and spouses at the work place, when LGBT renters and prospective home buyers are more likely to be denied housing, and when a hotel can refuse a room to an LGBT couple, turning travelers away because they happen to be gay," Sestak says.

He underscores that it is no longer enough for leaders to simply support the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) and the Fair Housing Act – we need them to be re-introduced over and over again until the holdouts in Congress are embarrassed into finally making law what 7 out of 10 Americans already know is right."

On World AIDS Day 2015, Sestak "walked in the shoes" of LGBT Pennsylvanians by visiting a Philadelphia ActionAIDS clinic, where he talked about HIV awareness and the various obstacles that must be overcome to ensure full equality for the LGBT community.

Sestak has also taken the position that "Under current federal law and Pennsylvania law, LGBT individuals can be denied housing for their sexual orientation and gender identity. While some states and the District of Columbia have caught up with the times and passed housing anti-discrimination laws for lesbian, gay and bisexual Americans, the federal government has failed to protect these individuals' access to one of the most basic securities -- housing."

Sestak has been a co-sponsor of the Freedom from Discrimination in Credit Act, which would prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity when extending credit. He co-sponsored the Employment Non-Discrimination Act making workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity illegal.

Before his Senate runs, Sestak served in the US house from 2007 to 2011. He was Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council and Deputy Chief, Naval Operations for Warfare Requirements and Programs, in the Navy.

At press time, Harper Polling indicated Sestak has the strongest image of the three candidates in the Democratic primary field for U.S. Senate, reaching majority favorability. He has the highest name identification of the candidates.

"My independent thinking and leadership has again placed me outside the Democratic party's establishment," he says about his current run for office. "But my independence has given me the support of regular Democrats (and even Independents and Republicans) because the government of the people has never before been held in such low regard by the people."

Sestak's positions, ratings -

- A woman's right to an abortion, 100% approval from NARAL and Planned Parenthood
- More restrictions on purchases and possessions of firearms, 0% rating from NRA, 100% rating from Brady Campaign
- Government administered health care.
- Action against "climate change".
- Pathway top citizenship for illegal immigrants.
- 100% rating from AFL/CIO.
- 36% rating US Chamber of Commerce.
- 5% rating from National Taxpayer Union.
- 81% rating from ACLU
- 92% rating from NAACP
- 100% rating from National Organization for Women

Like political maven Molly Ivins always said - You got to dance with them what brung you. Sestak brung us.

Special Snowflake Syndrome is Ruining the Progressive LGBTQ Movement

By Bil Browning, Bilerico Report

"I don't have all the answers. Probably none of us do," Executive Director Rea Carey said in remarks delivered during the conference's closing brunch. "I have struggled myself with how to lead in this moment."

Until then, Carey had kept a relatively low profile during the conference, even abdicating the organization's annual "State of the Movement" speech to a diverse group of lower level staffers as a nod to protestors who had heckled her the previous year. They had questioned how a "wealthy white woman" could speak for the movement and so she didn't.

Carey's repeated failures of solid leadership and direction are hardly unique. "Our movement, the progressive LGBTQ movement, is mirroring the tensions and conflicts of the larger society. Changes are happening in the world and Creating Change is reflecting some of those shifts too," she told the audience in the weekend's most truthful moment.

The progressive movement is suffering from the unseen blizzard of Special Snowflake Syndrome. A trend toward valuing the individual over the common good has resulted in unintended consequences. Pressured by academia, our method of organizing has gone from an assembly of individuals working together for the common good to a group of free spirits celebrating our collective individuality. Outside of academia, reality tells us that 108 billion people have lived on earth. You're not that special, snowflake.

"Intersectionality" is celebrated as a new theory involving separate personal identities instead of recognized as the age-old wisdom of making allies based on mutual interests. "Microaggressions" require mega responses completely out of proportion to any perceived slight. Our movement has become martyrs without a cause. Instead of viewing the world as a place that needs fixed, the new breed of activist only sees it as broken.

The right wing has its own version of the ailment, best illustrated by the rise of the Tea Party, but American progressives have swirled around so much they've landed on the right. Activists demand those with opposing views be denied the ability to speak in both public and private spaces; universities have suffered through multiple campaigns to rescind the invitations of speakers who didn't hew to an ever changing standard of morality. Respect for dialogue has been thrust aside in this polarized political envi-

Continued on page 7

Free Speech Just For Some?

By Trum Simmons
"Ally In The Academy" Columnist

In January some 200 protestors helped shut down a reception at the Creating Change conference in Chicago because they didn't think the conference should allow a certain group to speak. The conference, sponsored by the National LGBTQ Task Force, is one of the largest national LGBTQ gatherings each year.

The reception was hosted by the online magazine *A Wider Bridge (AWB)* and featured speakers from the Jerusalem Open House Pride and Tolerance organization (JOH). Creating Change had earlier dropped the reception after receiving criticism from Chicago-based Gay Liberation Network and Black Lives Matter, among others, but then reversed the decision after further consideration.

There is not time in this space to go into detail about the complex issues the protestors were raising. In short, they held that AWB and JOH were "pinkwashing," a public relations strategy whereby, in this case, Israel's record on LGBT rights is used to fend off negative perceptions arising from its treatment of the Palestinians. AWB responded to the protestors by saying there was a "strong undercurrent of anti-Semitism" in their protests.

Among the protesters was Bashar Makhay, from Tarab-NYC, an organization that "fosters an inclusive and safe community of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, and/or gender non-conforming Arab, Middle Eastern, and/or North African people in the greater New York City area."

I've never supported shouting anyone down or attempting to silence them.

Makhay said he was "disappointed that [the Task Force] chose to stand up for racism, colonialism and imperialism."

Everyone in this country believes in free speech, right? Isn't this one of the main tenets we hold dear in the U.S.? Well, maybe not so much. It's become common for protestors to try to shout down those who are saying things they disagree with. We have had several instances of this in the current presidential primary, haven't we?

I understand this desire to shut down the opposition, to silence them. But I don't believe that is the way to go.

Advocates of free speech like to cite the famous 1927 U.S. Supreme Court opinion by Chief Justice Louis Brandeis, who said, "If there is time to expose through discussion the falsehood and fallacies, to avert the evil by the process of education, the remedy to be applied is more speech, not enforced silence."

In short, as writer and lawyer Mike Godwin has put it, "The best answer for bad speech is more speech." Godwin, among other things, was counsel for the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) and for the plaintiffs who successfully challenged the Communications Decency Act in 1996. He wrote about this in his book *Cyber Rights: Defending Free Speech in the Digital Age.*

There have been many attempts over the past few years by college students, alumni and others to stifle free speech by insisting that certain speakers not be allowed on campus. One famous example is the Columbia University invitation to then Iran President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2007. Columbia President Lee Bollinger held firm that Ahmadinejad be allowed to speak, and thus everyone was treated to what *The New York Times* called Ahmadinejad's "bewildering thoughts" and assertions, such as the Nazi slaughter of six million Jews in World War II is not fact but theory, and—get this!—there are no LGBT people in Iran.

President Bollinger introduced Iran's president with what the *Times* called a "ten-minute verbal assault," beginning with "Mr. President, you exhibit all the signs of a petty and cruel dictator. You are either brazenly provocative or astonishingly uneducated." (I don't think I would have taken that approach—a simple recognition of the controversy surrounding his invitation would have sufficed.)

How many of us have given our own speeches or written our thoughts on controversies of the day? Haven't most of us simply exercised our right to free speech in order to counter bad speech?

I don't mean to say that protestors should not protest—I fully support their protests, as long as they allow speakers and organizations they are protesting to have their say too. I have attended and even led some protests over the years, but I've never supported shouting anyone down or attempting to silence them.

The controversy in Chicago was unfortunate. At the event some on both sides apparently behaved badly, and there was a lot of intemperate talk and even pushing and shoving. It was not a good day for those of us who want all groups working for social justice to be able to disagree with one another without curtailing free speech.

Why is it that social-justice advocates so often end up arguing with one another about ideology and tactics? Perhaps that's something to explore in my next Central Voice column.

Trum Simmons is professor emeritus of English and advisor emeritus to HACC Allies.

What Is "Medicare for All" Anyway?

The national debate on single-payer health reform, or "Medicare for All," is now part of the nation's presidential election.

Physicians for a National Health Program, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization of 20,000 doctors supports a single-payer national health insurance plan. They call the plan "the only effective remedy" for nation's continuing health care woes. They urge a focus on facts, not rhetoric.

Most of these misrepresentations, or myths, have been decisively refuted by peer-reviewed research, PNHP claims.

Davidson

Central Voice contacted local PNHP member Dr. William R. Davidson for his take on the "Medicare for All" idea. Davidson is a board certified cardiologist who has been practicing in central Pennsylvania for nearly 30 years.

"Eight years ago Obama and the Democrats who controlled Congress at that time saw the problem - 1 in 6 Americans uninsured, uncontrolled costs accounting for 17% of GDP, and uneven quality of care characterized by the highest infant mortality and the lowest life expectancy in the industrialized world," Davidson explains. "Unfortunately, their solution, the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) was a Band-Aid when what we needed was major surgery," he has concluded.

"By leaving the private insurance industry in place and failing to bargain effectively with drug companies costs have continued to escalate and access to care is still not universal," Davidson says. Today, even those, he notes, who are newly insured "discover that their high deductibles and co-pays often render their 'insurance' unavailable."

Davidson believes there is a better solution than Obamacare and that solution can only be achieved through a Single Payer System.

"Our neighbor to the North, Canada has had a Single Payer System in place for over 30 years. If a similar system were in place in the U.S., no one would fear loss of care with a job change as health insurance is no longer linked to employment. This also frees employers from those yearly battles with insurance companies over health benefits for their employees. Over half million medical bankruptcies occur in the U.S. every year. None in Canada," Davison says.

All Canadians enjoy the freedom to choose their doctor and hospital unencumbered by the networks which are so pervasive here in the U.S, he says. Canadians enjoy high quality of care while living longer than the average American. They pay half as much for healthcare as Americans because they don't pay insurance premiums, co-pays, or deductibles.

By acquiring a Canadian styled system, Davidson claims, 90% of Americans would discover they would pay less than they are presently paying. By group negotiating with the pharmaceutical industry, Canadians, like our own Veterans Administration pay 40% less for medications.

Other items called 'myths' about a Single Payer System include:

Myth - A single-payer system would impose an unacceptable financial burden on U.S. households.

Reality - Single payer is the only health reform that pays for itself by replacing hundreds of insurers and thousands of different private health plans, each with their own marketing, enrollment, billing, utilization review, actuary and other departments, with a single, streamlined, tax-financed nonprofit program. A recent study shows 95% of U.S. households would come out financially ahead under an improved version of Medicare for all.

Myth - The U.S. has a privately financed health care system.

Reality - About 64% of U.S. health spending is currently financed by taxpayers. (Estimates that are lower than this exclude two large sources of taxpayer-funded care: health insurance for government employees and tax subsidies to employers and individuals for purchasing private health plans.) On a per capita basis, the amount of government-funded health care in the U.S. exceeds the health spending of nations with universal health systems, e.g. Canada. We are paying for a national health program, but not getting it.

Myth - A single-payer system would overturn the gains won under the Affordable Care Act and provide inferior coverage to what people have today.

Reality - A single-payer system would go far beyond the modest improvements that the ACA made around the edges of our current private-insurance-based system and ensure truly universal care, affordability and health security. For example, H.R. 676, the Expanded and Improved Medicare for All Act, would guarantee coverage for all necessary medical care, including prescription drugs, hospital, surgical, outpatient services, primary and preventive care, emergency services, dental, mental health, home health, physical therapy, rehabilitation (including for substance abuse), vision care and correction, hearing services including hearing aids, chiropractic, durable medical equipment, palliative care, podiatric care, and long-term care.

Physicians for a National Health Program (www.pnhp.org) has been advocating for single-payer national health insurance for three decades. It neither supports nor opposes any candidates for public office.

Mormon Mayor and Councilman Sworn In

Newly elected Mayor of Salt Lake City Jackie Biskupski, 49, taking oath of office with fiancé Betty Iverson. She is the city's first openly gay mayor, a landmark the former state lawmaker acknowledged shortly after taking the oath of office. "I know that we have work to do still. And it is work that I take seriously," she told reporters. "But I am a firm believer that in order for true equality to exist for anyone, we must pursue it for everyone, and that is a goal of mine."

Utah star marriage plaintiff Derek Kitchen sworn into Salt Lake City City Council term with his husband Moudi. Kitchen, a 26-year-old small business owner, and his husband, Moudi, were one of three same-sex couples who successfully challenged Utah's marriage ban in 2013. "My involvement in this landmark litigation allowed me to become an advocate for equality and fairness in our city and state," Kitchen said in announcing his council bid last year. "For that I am very grateful."

Photos by Kate Kendell

Rep. Sturla Unveils Marcellus Shale Tax Plan

State Rep. Mike Sturla is seeking support for his legislation that would implement a graduated severance tax on Marcellus Shale to fund pension obligations at state and local levels.

"The proposal is a fair approach that would capture much-needed funding for the commonwealth for one of our most valuable resources while providing a break to the industry when prices are down," Sturla explained.

The legislation would exempt gas severed from a stripper well; severed from a storage field; and used within 5 miles of the well for manufacturing in Pennsylvania. Additionally, the current impact fee, post-production costs and initial capital costs would be deductible from a severance tax liability.

Funds generated would be used to fund the unfunded pension liability before Act 120 of 2010 pension obligations for SERS and PSERS, unfunded municipal pensions and post-Act 120 of 2010 pension obligations for local school districts and the state.

"There are myriad aspects of this legislation that have long-term benefits and impacts. I look forward to working with stakeholders to come to an agreement that provides a benefit to all involved," Sturla said.

Sturla's plan would tax natural gas at the following rates:

RATE	GAS VALUE
4%	$0-$.99/mcf
5%	$1-$1.99/mcf
6%	$2-$2.99/mcf
7%	$3-$3.99/mcf
8%	$4-$4.99/mcf
9%	$5 and above/mcf

Eyad Alkurabi leads a pro-Palestinian protest at Creating Change 2016

Pro-Palestinian protesters march through the lobby of the Chicago Hilton at Creating Change 2016

Snowflake Syndrome *contd from pg 4*

ronment as students proclaim universities "safe spaces" instead of an institute that challenges high school preconceptions and problems.

A cocktail reception for representatives for Israel's leading LGBT organization was shut down by a couple hundred protestors, a few of whom were shouting a genocidal chant, as "intersectional" outside groups descended on the event bringing along a swarm of attendees. Obviously well used banners and placards were placed throughout the procession as participants tried to learn new chants like "Palestine will be free from the river to the sea." While it sounded appropriately liberal to the folks caught up in the moment and puffed full of snowflake activist theory, it refers to the complete extermination of the Jewish state.

Musing shortly before the protest, pro-Palestinian organizer Eyad Alkurabi acknowledged the mistake of trying to shut down the reception instead of engaging in dialogue with the Jewish organizers. "You're right," he said. "It was the wrong approach." Within two hours, he was at the forefront of the protest designed to do just that and any lessons learned were apparently forgotten.

The Most Radical Way of Organizing Is Teamwork

What the would-be queer radicals – at a conference that appeared to skew much younger than normal – ended up doing was predictable. The squall became a storm and finally a blizzard of its own. The Task Force has been accused of being anti-Semitic by several prominent community leaders and organizations; a post-conference feedback session turned into a circle jerk of amplified public chest beating and rending of fair trade cloth. The organization has put out their own flurry of press releases issuing multiple apologies, expressing solidarity with the Jewish community, and commitment to immigrant rights and reform. Flailing wildly, the Task Force wasn't able to stand in the face of the storm and the wider progressive movement hasn't battered similar storms any better.

The new tagline for a re-branded Task Force is "Be you." They got what they asked for. The crowd of young activists, many of whom were emulating the citizens of the capital in The Hunger Games with bright blue hair and lipstick, couldn't see that in the end they all looked the same. They were being themselves just like everyone else. As one veteran activist observed, "We cannot create change until we are able to accept change within ourselves and accept that we are not individual in our struggles."

One blog post from Dean Spade, an associate professor at the Seattle University School of Law, charging A Wider Bridge with "pinkwashing" blew this controversy into existence. Instead of dispassionately looking at the issue, the Task Force, knowing that a snowflake rarely falls alone, canceled the event as a knee-jerk appeasement only to reverse the decision after getting walloped by those who saw the cancellation as censorship based on anti-Semitism and then hit with the blizzard of further controversy and ugly accusations.

"We will learn from and build on this moment. I have a lot of fears about the direction of our movement," Carey said during her short speech. "But I have a lot of hope too. In many ways, in the work that lies ahead of us as a movement, I believe we have the opportunity to be extraordinary. If we do this right, I believe we can make this next era of the LGBTQ movement our most dynamic, powerful, most inclusive moment for leadership and transformation yet."

We won't have that breakthrough moment until we remember that the most radical thing possible is to sacrifice for the common good. Compromise and dialogue form the backbone of civilization as we've pulled each other up to advance the human race. The ability to recognize you can support Israel's pro-LGBT policies and the Palestinian fight for freedom has been blanketed with vitriol and the Bush-era doctrine of "You're either with us or against us." As the ramifications of the pro-Palestinian protest aimed at a group known for protesting injustice become clear, what's still unknown is whether or not the actual opportunity will be grabbed or if it will melt away.

As the conference ended, Alkurabi stood in the hotel lobby yelling, "I don't feel safe here. I won't be coming back to Creating Change!" as if his safety was the only consideration. The safety of those who felt threatened with genocidal chants and anti-Jewish insults was forgotten in the feel-good heat of millennial mental masturbation. No one around him paid attention; his outrage was as brief and meaningless as a solitary snowflake.

OUT AND ABOUT

Local Sanders Volunteers Churn the Bern

By Central Voice

"Overwhelming," is how Carrie Fowler, Bernie Sanders campaign volunteer, described Harrisburg's reception of presidential candidate Bernie Sanders.

February 9, Sanders won the New Hampshire primary election beating Hillary Clinton among nearly every demographic group, according to exit polls. He carried majorities of both men and women. He won among those with and without college degrees. He won among gun owners and non-gun owners. He beat Mrs. Clinton among previous primary voters and those participating for the first time. And he ran ahead among both moderates and liberals.

Is Sanders' New Hampshire experience reflected in Harrisburg's reception of the controversial candidate?

On the Saturday before the New Hampshire primary election, 15 volunteers spent seven hours at Harrisburg's Broad Street Market. "We collected 285 signatures. People were eager to sign the petition," Fowler says. Some were upset they couldn't sign because they are Independents or live out of state. Her posse has also canvassed door to door.

Why Sanders?

"The polarity of Washington has me very scared right now for women, people of color and the poor," Fowler says. Citizens United needs to be overturned, she feels, and believes Sanders is the person to challenge the top 1% by fighting for the American middle class.

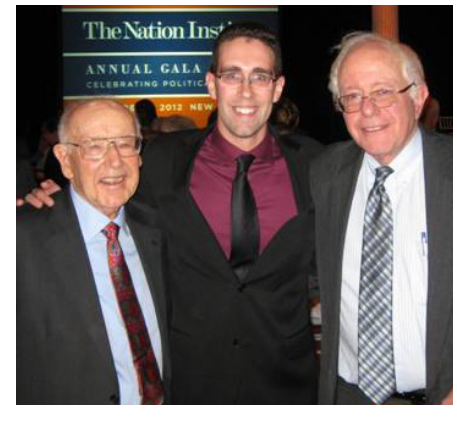
Fowler also supports many of Sanders other policy positions: his racial justice platform, he voted against the Defense of Marriage Act in 1996, does not take money from billionaires, supports marijuana decriminalization, supports a single payer, universal health care system, raising minimum wage, infrastructure investment, opposed Iraq War, believes in climate change and a path to immigrant citizenship.

As press time, here's what's at stake.

Super Tuesday is March 1 with elections or caucuses in Alabama, Alaska, American Samoa, Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Massachusetts, Minnesota, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia and Wyoming.

Then March 5 is the Kansas, followed by caucuses in Kansas and Maine and primaries in Kentucky and Louisiana March 6. March 15 is the next contest with primaries in Florida, Illinois, Missouri, North Carolina and Ohio.

Bernie Sanders volunteers worked a recent Saturday crowd of shoppers at Harrisburg's Broad Street Market. From left: Jen Burke Valley, Carrie Fowler, and Anna Pruett.



In December of 2012, The Nation magazine at its Nation Institute gala honored Don Shaffer, grandfather of Harrisburg Hope founder and former Central Voice columnist Alan Kennedy-Shaffer. From left, honoree Don Shaffer, now deceased; Kennedy-Shaffer, and current presidential candidate Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT), who presented Shaffer with his award. The elder Shaffer's work has included battling racial discrimination on Long Island, leadership in the National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee, SANE, the New York Civil Liberties Union, Peace Action, and the Working Families Party. The Nation Institute has also launched the Doris Shaffer Memorial Lecture Series.

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Aging with Pride and the Arts

Affiliated with the Harrisburg-based LGBT Community Center's Aging with Pride Program, a small group of arts lovers have started attending local big screen presentations in commercial theatres of opera, dance, and other art forms. They meet for a meal, fun, and fellowship before or after the screening. Anyone interested in joining the group may call the center at (717) 920-9534. From left: Tony, Doug, and Robert. Back: Pat and Richard.

Central Voice photo

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Study: Condoms Don't Reduce Feeling

Men of the world: Ever told a woman you couldn't use a condom because it would make you lose your erection? Then it's time to start formulating another excuse, as new research shows rubbers aren't to blame for wilting wieners.

A study of nearly 500 heterosexual men aged 18-24 found that those who cited condoms as a barrier to an erection were more likely to be suffering from general erectile dysfunction whether they used a condom or not. Of those surveyed, 38 percent said condoms had no effect on their performance, while almost the same number reported problems either during application or sex itself.

"Condom-associated erection problems have been a very under-researched topic," explained Dr. Cynthia Graham, co-author of the study, published in The Journal of Sexual Medicine. "Increasing evidence suggests, however, that they may influence whether condoms are used correctly or from start to finish of sex."

For 24-year-old James, the findings have come as something of a surprise. "I had fancied a nice girl for a little while and we ended up in bed [one] night," he recalls of an ill-fated occasion. "A mixture of too much alcohol, some nerves, and then my attempt to put on a condom all meant my downstairs went to sleep."

"It was all very tragic," he says. "A condom is definitely the path to a floppy penis because it removes all the sensitivity and feeling, and then during sex it feels much less pleasurable, so you're more at prone to going floppy again. They're a struggle to put on, especially after a few drinks, and then usually end up inside out, so have to be reapplied by which time either you've gone floppy or it's just horrendously awkward and the moment is lost.

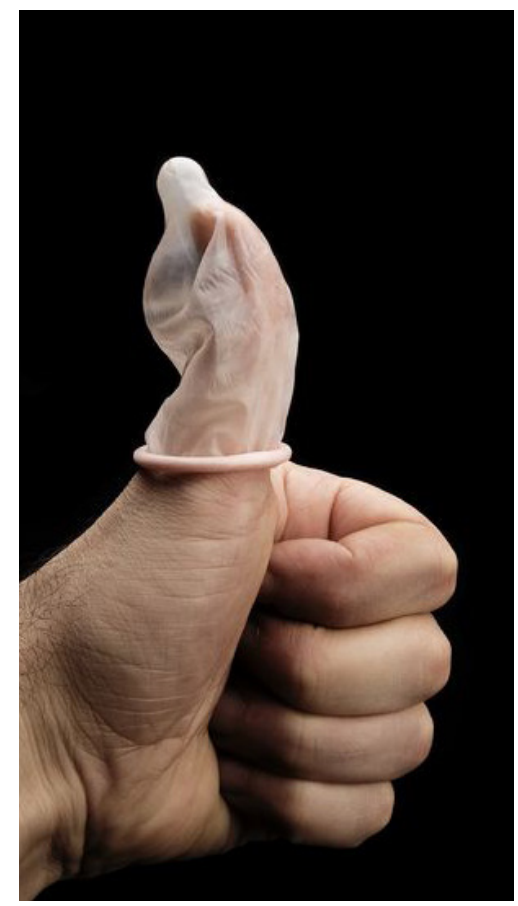
"The awkwardness is where the girl is kind of lying there, waiting for you to get it on, and you feel a pressure or self-consciousness."

The lack of research into the broader issues which could impact penile function means that little of the link between one's psychological state and future performance has been uncovered, but as the paper suggests, "men who first experience loss of erection when they use condoms might worry about [difficulty] experiencing erections more generally and hence be more vulnerable [to erectile problems]." Referencing prior studies on its physiological causes, the researchers note that around 16 percent of American men under 40 reported intermittent issues maintaining an erection, while another showed that performance difficulties only usually lasted for the first minute of sexual activity.

The researchers found that more than a third of participants had never been taught how to use a condom correctly, which could be a major factor in young men believing that using one will affect them in the bedroom. It's troubling that so many men are lacking basic knowledge when it comes to condom application, calling into question the efficacy—or even existence of—sexual education in schools.

Without adequate grounding in how to practice safe sex, the risk of unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases remains that much higher—a consequence that could easily be allayed by putting sexual health provisions in place in more than the 21 states that currently mandate it. Some 37 states reportedly allow for medically inaccurate sex education, according to the Guttmacher Institute, while just 18 require teachers to provide their students with information about contraception.

With damning statistics like these, it's no wonder bogus—and downright risky—myths about sexual performance have been allowed to proliferate.



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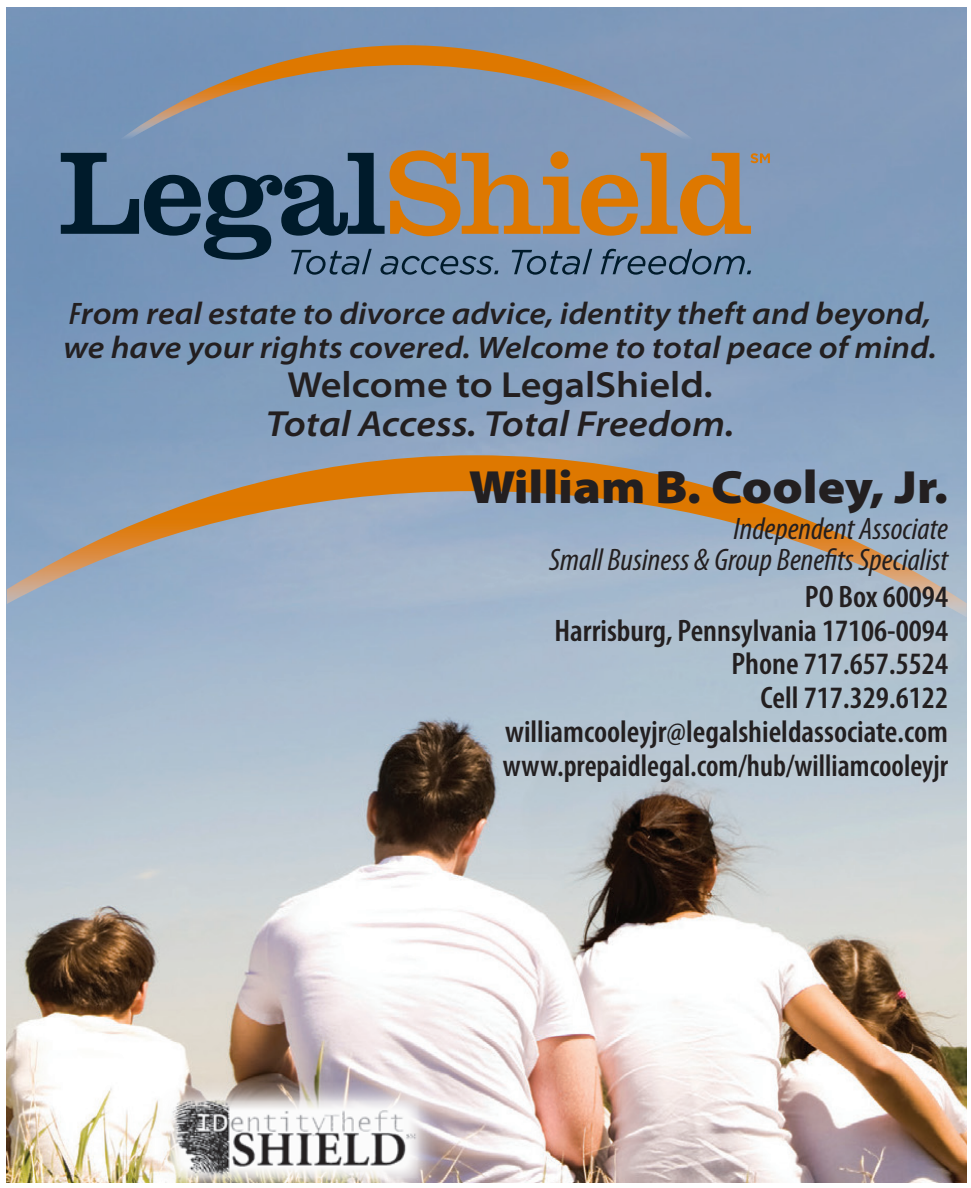

TransCentralPA Topics

By Joanne Carroll
president of TransCentralPA

Keystone Conference

Keystone, what is a keystone anyway? Two definitions I discovered are; a central stone at the summit of an arch, locking the whole arch together, and the central principle or part of a policy, system, etc., on which all else depends.

Of course, TransCentralPA defines it in a slightly different way. As the keystone bridges and holds together associated entities, Trans-identifying people do the same, and the Keystone Conference is a celebration of the unique diversity of gender and our central and unifying place in society.

As we welcome an expected 600 or more visitors to Harrisburg, to our "Celebration of Gender Diversity", for the eighth consecutive year we are excited looking forward to renewing friendships, making new ones, learning more about ourselves and each other, as well as so many opportunities to share a meal and great conversations.

This year at the 2016 Keystone Conference, we are even more amped up because in addition to our tried and true format, we are adding something more. Two new program tracks are added to our lineup.

First, a Provider Training Program designed specifically to encourage primary care physicians and care extenders to develop medical practices that are welcoming, affirming and capable of delivering quality health care to the transgender community.

Second, we added a Family and Youth Program track, because more and more the youngest among us are learning the language of the transgender experience at an earlier age. Parents of trans-kids are often caught by surprise, and are often woefully ill equipped to provide their child with the support they need to survive.

Adding these two new program tracks created a logistical challenge, because we were already using all available space at the Sheraton Harrisburg/Hershey. The two new tracks will be conducted across Lindle Road from the Sheraton at the Red Lion Hotel.

The Family and Youth program will see the reinvigorated "Butterfly Ball" and pizza party and dance underwritten by TransCentralPA, and managed and operated by the LGBT Center of Central Pennsylvania. I almost forgot to mention it is free and pre-registered attendees can get a chance to win $500.00 for their favorite charity.

Attending the 2016 Keystone Conference is not limited to just members of the transgender community. We love our allies and non-trans friends and most certainly they are welcome to participate in everything available. The most attended event by friends and allies is the Gala Banquet and Dance.

Come on out and "Celebrate Gender Diversity" with us. Full details and registration information are available on the conference website at: keystone –conference.org

Olympics' New Transgender Guidelines Do Not Mandate Surgery

Outsports obtained a copy of the transgender guidelines the International Olympic Committee is expected to adopt before the Summer Olympics later this year. Not yet published, the guidelines stem from an unpublicized "Consensus Meeting on Sex Reassignment and Hyperandrogenism" the IOC held last November.

The guidelines leave no restriction for a trans man, like triathlete Chris Mosier, to compete against men. Mosier's participation in the World Duathlon Championships, for which he has qualified, has been in doubt.

Joanna Harper, chief medical physicist, radiation oncology, Providence Portland Medical Center, was one of the people at that meeting. She also happens to be trans, and she said her voice in the room was important in determining these guidelines.

"The new IOC transgender guidelines fix almost all of the deficiencies with the old rules," Harper said via email late Thursday night. "Hopefully, organizations such as the ITA will quickly adapt to the new IOC guidelines and all of the outdated trans policies will get replaced soon."

In addition to opening the door wide for trans men, the new policy removes the need for women to undergo gender-reassignment surgery to compete.

"The waiting period for trans women goes from two years after surgery to one year after the start of HRT," Harper said. "This matches up with the NCAA rules and is as good as anything. The waiting period was perhaps the most contentious item among our group and one year is a reasonable compromise."

While no publicly out trans athlete has competed in the Olympics, Mosier has earned a spot in the World Duathlon Championships later this year; His participation could have been held up by existing IOC policy that mandated gender-reassignment surgery. Other trans athletes, like Keelin Godsey, have come within inches of qualifying for the Olympics and other World Championships.

Lawyer: Tiger's Friendship with A Goat Is "Gay Propaganda"

Editor's note: First it was Man on Dog by Pennsylvania's former US Senator and perennial presidential candidate Rick Santorum. Now This...

By Hayes Brown
BuzzFeed News World Editor

Remember the awesome video of a tiger and a goat being best friends from a few months ago?

Taken in the Primorsky Safari Park in Russia, the goat was meant to be a meal for the Siberian tiger named Cupid. But rather than be devoured, the fearless goat — later named Timur — befriended the big cat. Cue "awwws" and probably a Disney film or something in the future.

Now, a lawyer thinks Tiger Cupid's friendship with Goat Timur is "Gay Propaganda".

Krestianov

Russian lawyer Alexei Krestianov, from Novosibirsk, is not enamored with this heartwarming tale of friendship between a feline and an ungulate.

In a lengthy post on Facebook, Krestianov — which we're pretty sure translates to "Cranky-pants" — says that all coverage of Timur and Cupid should be banned because it could make kids want to be gay.

Okay, his name actually translates to "peasant" but he really does think that all goat/tiger relations coverage falls under Russia's infamous "anti-gay propaganda" law. His Facebook post is a copy of a letter to the General Prosecutor's Office in which he calls for future stories to be banned, worrying that the coverage works to "generate interest in non-traditional sexual relationships."

He also says their "non-traditional co-habitation" is "an intrusion into the private lives of underage citizens and covert gay propaganda, as well as an active imposition of homosexuality," which is a totally normal thing to think about a tiger and goat.

Krestianov's bleating is moot for now, it seems, as the park announced in a post online that the two have been temporarily separated so that the goat can undergo veterinary care.

They're slated to be reunited soon, but officials also worry that with the return of mating season — which could make Cupid's behavior take a turn — or the possible arrival of several Siberian leopards, their split may be more permanent.

Political Update

continued from page 3

• VA Bill Blocks Anti-LGBT Discrimination

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus but there shall be no anti-LGBT discrimination laws in the State of Virginia. That's what state Del. Bob Marshall (R-Prince William County) intends with House Bill 385. Virginia's statewide anti-discrimination law does not include sexual orientation and gender identity.

• Pentagon Expects Trans Military Ban Decision

Reports are that the Pentagon will make a determination on the transgender military ban this spring after the conclusion of a January internal six-month review. Pentagon spokesperson Matthew Allen said Defense Secretary Ashton Carter will make a decision at that time. "If the new DOD policy is based on the successful experiences of our allies who allow transgender personnel to serve, and on the scientific consensus of the the American Medical Association and retired Surgeons General that there is no medically valid reason to exclude transgender individuals from military service, then I believe that full repeal will take place and implementation will be successful," Allen told the *Washington Blade.*

• Missouri Bill Bans Profiling including LGBT

Two African-American Democrats in Missouri, ground zero for the #BlackLivesMatter movement in the wake of Michael Brown's 2014 murder, have introduced a bill banning police profiling of racial and other minorities, including gays. The bill requires law enforcement officers to report the "perceived race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability, English language proficiency or national origin" of motorists and pedestrians who are stopped by police. Agencies would then report the data to the state, and if it were to show a pattern of police profiling, they could be subject to increased officer training requirements, funding cuts and even de-certification.

• Rules Discrimination Is Discrimination

Buzzfeed's Chris Geidner reports that the distinction between gender stereotyping and sexual orientation discrimination "is illusory and artificial". Judge Dean Pregerson wrote that ruling in a lawsuit against Pepperdine University in the latest move to protect LGBT people from discrimination under existing civil rights laws.

PR Slip Her Destiny?

Puerto Rico may be looking for a new beauty queen after 20-year-old Destiny Velez fired off a round of offensive tweets about Muslims. The former beauty contestant sent several tweets to filmmaker Michael Moore after he posted a tweet with the hashtag *#WeAreAllMuslim* on Thursday, according to *Latin Times.* Her Twitter account has since been disabled but she reportedly sent several tweets including one that said, "Muslims use our constitution to terrorize USA & plant gas stations."

• Clinton Sought to Assist Md. Marriage Effort

Washington Blade's Chris Johnson reports that a Hillary Clinton email made public by the State Department reveals she made an effort in 2012 to help with passage of same-sex marriage in Maryland, even though at the time she had yet to come out for gay nuptials. The message was part of the batch of emails made public by the State Department.

• Lesbian Widow's Lawsuit to Proceed

A federal court in California recently ruled a lawsuit can proceed against FedEx for withholding pension benefits to the same-sex partner of a deceased worker. U.S. District Judge Phyllis Hamilton has refused to throw out the case despite objections from the shipping company that withholding the benefits is justified because the Defense of Marriage Act was in effect at the time the employee died.

• FDA Eliminates Lifetime Blood Donor

The Food & Drug Administration has eliminated the U.S. lifetime ban on gay and bisexual men donating blood. Stephen Ostroff, the FDA's acting commissioner, said the change reflects scientific evidence and continued safety to reduce the risk of HIV transmission via blood donation.

• Transgender Man Wins Insurance Coverage

Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund reports securing insurance coverage for a transgender man's medically necessary care after his union-sponsored health insurance plan refused to cover it. Adrian Sealy works in a Rochester, NY hospital as a cleaning and sanitation specialist. He is a member of 1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers East, the nation's largest union for health care workers. The union is self-insured for its workers' health care. Adrian was informed that his health care would not be covered because "in the opinion of the 1199 SEIU National Benefit Fund… gender re-assignment surgery is not a covered benefit." Late last year, TLDEF challenged the union's decision resulting in the union reversing course.

• MA Court Rules against Catholic School

In a first-of-its-kind decision, Massachusetts Associate Superior court Justice Douglas H. Wilkins judge ruled that Fontbonne Academy, a Catholic girls' high school, discriminated against Matthew Barrett on the basis of sexual orientation and sex when it rescinded its offer of the job of food services manager to him because he is married to another man. The court ruled that Fontbonne had clearly and directly violated the Massachusetts nondiscrimination law; was not exempt from the law; and had no constitutional defenses against its discriminatory conduct.

• New Mexico Push-back on Rights

Two Republican New Mexico state legislators, Reps. David Gallegos and Nora Espinoza, have proposed House Bill 55 allowing a business to deny services to gay people and people who aren't clearly male or female if it violated their religious beliefs. The measure would remove the words "sexual orientation and gender identity" from the state's current Human Rights Act, which currently says services can not be denied based sexual orientation and gender identity, in addition to race, age, religion, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, physical or mental handicap or serious medical condition.

• Anti-gay Bias Same As Gender Discrimination

Washington Blade's Chris Johnson reports LGBT people lack explicit protections in federal law against discrimination, but a growing number of courts are determining anti-gay discrimination constitutes gender discrimination under current law. On a state level, 31 states including Pennsylvania, do not have anti-gay discrimination protections.

• Norman City Council Passes Protections

After a year of preparation, the Norman City Council has unanimously passed fully inclusive protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender residents of Norman, Oklahoma. The resolution interprets the existing Human Rights Ordinance to include sexual orientation and gender identity under the enumerated class of "sex." Norman is the first city in Oklahoma to fully protect the LGBT community with equal protections provided to other minority communities.

• Man on Dog, Man on Marriage

With no real job prospects in sight, Man on Dog former US Senator Rick Santorum continues to bottom out in every presidential poll. He recently made a new commitment to ignore the U.S. Supreme Court's 2013 decision striking down the Defense of Marriage Act. Santorum made the comments in an interview with the Catholic news service EWTN, saying DOMA was "wholly wrongly" found unconstitutional. "This was a decision that was extra-constitutional," Santorum said. "That law is good, valid law and I would enforce that law."

Classic Madonna Moments

From Her 'Rebel Heart Tour'

HEAR ME OUT: BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Be still my gay heart.

Though Madonna's latest spectacle, Rebel Heart Tour, spotlights her 13th studio album of the same name, the concert queen still reached into her back pocket and pulled out a swoon-worthy collection of classics. Ones she hasn't touched in years – and an exclusive addition just for her fellow Detroiters.

"Hometown girl is back!" Madonna proudly declared on Oct. 1 in Detroit.

And, oh yes, *she was*. The icon's stop at Joe Louis Arena could only be described as the stuff of dreams, a delicious fusion of old and new, writhing nuns and blissed-out fun. Rebel Heart was all sweet… not sticky. And nostalgic.

Gays, we have so much to be thankful for.

'True Blue'

"Baby, I love you," Madonna gushed, dipping into her back catalog for this adorable 1985 relic. Stripped of its pop sheen, "True Blue" became a finger-snappin', hand-clappin' campfire sing-along, with Madonna plucking away at a ukulele. Yes, baby, we love you too.

'Deeper and Deeper'

In 2004, for the Re-Invention World Tour, she took her great disco rave from 1992's Erotica to the cabaret, quieting it down for a lounge-style slowie. Not this time. For Rebel Heart, "Deeper and Deeper" retained its original pulse, dizzying the crowd of queers with its dance spins as Madge and her crew worked the heart-capped catwalk with a voguish hustle.

'Burning Up'

Flame bursts boomed from behind Madonna on a towering backdrop, but the diva herself was the one bringing the heat. As she punched her electric guitar, transforming this 1983 fan favorite into a rockin' rush, someone probably should've called 911.

'Like a Virgin'

Bitch, she's Madonna. Owning the stage like a boss during a solo hip-hop take on "Like a Virgin," Madonna bounced her booty during a ravishing display of agelessness – proof that Pilates and full-powered Beyoncé-type fans are a girl's best friends.

'La Isla Bonita'

Toro, toro! No, there wasn't a bull, and this wasn't "Take a Bow" (sigh). Hand to pelvis, Madonna moved to the Spanish vibes of "La Isla Bonita," showing off her slow mo gyrations amidst her festively-attired stage gang who came together for a performance that was muy bien.

'Dress You Up' Medley

If Madonna wants to spoil us, who are we to argue? Not only did "Dress You Up" (in full!) make the cut, but the diva went deep into the '80s for "Into the Groove" and "Lucky Star," essentially giving life to all basking in her presence. #Humanitarian

'Who's that Girl'

Dusting off the title song from her 1987 film, Who's that Girl, Madonna gave this ditty a guitar-guided makeover – nearly 30 years after last performing it on tour! Despite the fact that Madonna was actually there, donning gypsy attire and taking our collective breath away, it was hard to tell if this was real life.

'Frozen'

This used to be her playground, which Madonna enthused during her hometown stop, proclaiming that, "Detroit made me who I am today." And she didn't stop there. She swapped set-list staple "Ghost Town" for "Frozen," her stunning Ray of Light-era trip to the dark side, stripped to merely the rawness of acoustic guitar and a vocal that left everyone, well, you guessed it: frozen.

'Material Girl'

Raise your hand if you wet yourself during this one. Beyond the obvious fact that "Material Girl" sits atop Madonna's smoldering hit heap, the way she folded it into Rebel Heart – simple, chic, Great Gatsby-inspired – was pure blast-from-the-past pleasure.

'Love Don't Live Here Anymore'

After shoving a faux lover down a spiral staircase at the end of "Heartbreak City," Madonna caused a ruckus when she launched into her showstopping ballad "Love Don't Live Here Anymore," from 1984's *Like a Virgin*. It was just a snippet, a tease – because, you know, she's Madonna.

'Holiday'

It didn't take this, the encore, to know that Madonna had let her hair down again, ditching brooding theatrics for the essence of early Madonna: frilly fun. Rebel Heart Tour was a two-hour-plus celebration of Madonna's career, and it all came to a boisterous, confetti-filled head with "Holiday."

Chris Azzopardi is the editor of Q Syndicate, the international LGBT wire service.

Art Builds Homes

"Any given time we have 1 to 5 projects underway," says Antron Watson, assistant executive director, Habitat for Humanity, Harrisburg.

That's why the 11th Annual Art Auction, April 1,6-10 p.m. this session appointment that for the organization. "We've always served all of Dauphin County, but now we are expanding our focus outside of Allison Hill," Watson tells *Central Voice.*

Besides expanding their geography the organization has also expanded its help to those in need of adequate housing. "Although we do housing rehabilitation's on vacant properties and some new construction, we also do what we call 'critical home repairs' like that focus on safety, security, accessibility, and efficiency, for example , windows, heating, and accessibility ramps," Watson explains. Currently Habitat has a project underway in Steelton.

"We're hoping to raise $20,000 through our annual benefit auction," Watson says.

"If we raise $20,000, Habitat will be able to complete the needed critical repairs to keep two families in their homes this year, or provide the necessary materials for our construction team to rehabilitate the interior of an abandoned home, as a step towards moving a family out of poverty housing," Watson says.

In addition to the help that habitat receives from Home Depot, benefitting veterans, and the Ames Co., and Schneider Electric, "we need additional support from the community at large," he says. Over the past 10 years the auction has raised nearly $200,000.

Attendees will enjoy quality auction items from local galleries, art associations, jewelers, wood workers, sculptures plus a raffle during the live auctioned event.

Info: Antron Watson, 717-545-7299×203; artauction@habitat.org

Hidden Works

The Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art is exhibiting The Hidden Works of J.N. "Ding" Darling until June 18.

Jay N. "Ding" Darling was a leading political cartoonist in the 1900s and an important figure in the early conservation movement. He won the Pulitzer Prize twice (1924 and 1943) and reached America through more than 100 of the nation's leading newspapers while he was employed at The Des Moines Register and Sioux City Journal.

Darling created cartoons through two World Wars and the terms of seven presidents. His cartoons covered important events in the 20th century, including the Great Depression, prohibition and the labor movement. Throughout his life Darling was also a supporter of the conservation efforts that lead to the creation of The National Wildlife Federation, the first Duck Stamp in 1934, The Cooperative Research Unit Programs across the nation. Darling changed the landscape of our national wildlife refuge system as we know it today. There is also a refuge on Sanibel, Florida which bears his name, The Jay N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge.

The Hidden Works exhibit showcases a collection of artifacts that have rarely been exhibited publicly. The hidden works on display include personal and family objects, cartoons, sketches, and uncovered original printing plates from The Des Moines Register. Many of these items have never been on display to the public. No photographs are to be taken to protect the items and to respect the lenders.

Info: www.nedsmithcenter.org

LANCASTER EVENTS

• **North Rocks: Gem Mineral Fossil and Jewelry show**
April 16-17, Farm and Home Center, Lancaster, PA
This show features expansive gem, mineral, fossil and handcrafted jewelry collections available for purchase. In addition, enjoy interacting with other fans of geology through hands-on children's activities and educational demonstrations. Lectures both days.
Admission: Adults: $5 Children 3-12: $2 Children 2 and under free. Free parking.

YORK EVENTS

• **First Fridays**
5-9 p.m., Free
All of the downtown districts (Market District, Royal Square, Weco)
Central Market House
First Friday is a celebration of downtown shops, restaurants, cultural venues, and nightlife hotspots. Downtown shops and restaurants host special events, offer refreshments & promotions, and sponsor live entertainment.

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Five-Artist Invitational Exhibition Including:
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Coming Soon:

SISTER ACT
Fulton Theatre
March 1–26

HILARIOUSLY DIVINE! Based on the hit 1992 film and featuring original music by Tony® and 8-time Oscar winner Alan Menken (Newsies, Beauty And The Beast, Little Shop Of Horrors, Hercules), this uplifting musical is a sparkling tribute to the power of friendship. When disco diva Deloris Van Cartier witnesses a murder, she is put in protective custody in the one place the cops are sure she'll never be found – a convent! Disguised as a nun, she finds herself at odds with the rigid lifestyle and the uptight Mother Superior. Using her unique disco moves and singing talent to inspire the choir, Deloris breathes new life into the church and community but in doing so, blows her cover. Filled with powerful gospel music, outrageous dancing and a truly moving story, Sister Act is reason to REJOICE!

GHOST, THE MUSICAL
Fulton Theatre
April 19 - May 15

A love that will last forever. Adapted from the hit film by its Academy Award-winning screenwriter, Bruce Joel Rubin, Ghost The Musical follows Sam and Molly, a tech wizard and a gifted potter, whose connection takes a shocking turn after Sam's murder. Trapped between two worlds, Sam refuses to leave Molly when he learns she is in grave danger. He enlists storefront psychic, Oda Mae Brown, whose reluctance clashes hilariously and touchingly with his desperation. Tickets: Purchased at Theatre, by calling 717-397-7425, or online.

THE HEIRESS
Sharadin Bigler Theatre
March 17–26

This riveting tale of love and family tensions has kept audiences on the edge of their seats since its Broadway debut in 1947. An award-winning film version two years later and several successful Broadway revivals have confirmed the power and fascination of this classic story. Tickets: (717) 733-7966; epacboxoffice@gmail.com

THE OLD FRIENDS
Open Stage of Harrisburg
April 14 - May 1, 2016

Matriarch Mamie Borden and the remaining members of two longtime Texas farming families await a visit from Mamie's son Hugo and his wife Sybil. When Sybil arrives with alarming news, old friends on opposing sides must confront the issues surrounding legacy, loyalty, and the meaning of happiness that have hounded them for generations
Tickets: 717-232-OPEN (6736)

WWE LIVE ROAD TO WRESTLEMANIA
Giant Center
March 13

Scheduled to appear: Intercontinental Champion Dean Ambrose, Kevin Owens, Big Show Demon Kane, Dudley Boyz, Bray Wyatt and Wyatt Family
Tickets: 1-800-745-3000, HersheyTheatre.com

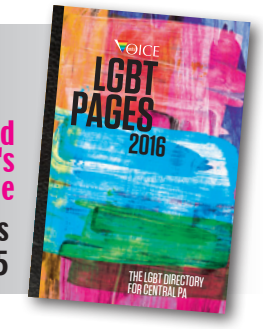
COPPÉLIA
Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet
Whitaker Center
Sunoco Performance Theater
April 16

One of the most lively and amusing story ballets, Alan Hineline's must-see staging of this 19th century comic classic combines a young couple's tiff with the unusual workings of old toymaker Dr. Coppelius whose greatest desire is to create a doll with a soul. When Franz becomes infatuated at the sight of a beautiful girl who sits by the window in the house of the mysterious inventor, he sets aside his fiancée — the feisty Swanilda who isn't above disguise and breaking into the eccentric dollmaker's workshop to win back her fiancé. What follows is a delightful tale of mischief, mayhem and mistaken identities!
Tickets: 717-214-ARTS (2787)

SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Majestic Theatre, Gettysburg College
April 15, 8 p.m.

The Gettysburg College Symphony Orchestra, conducted this year by Visiting Professor Ze'ev Dorman, forms the core of the orchestral program at the Sunderman Conservatory at Gettysburg College.
Info: 717-337-8200; boxofficeinfo@gettysburg.edu

MADE for EACH OTHER
YOU and Central PA's LGBT guide
Contact Steve Kozokas
stevek@pressandjournal.com • 717-856-3115



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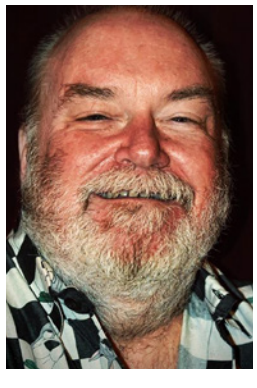

Jim Mills

The North Sea Is for the Birds **is a full-length collection local poet Jim Mills' satirical, charmingly humorous and darkly honest poetry. Written over 30 years, Mills is a rare Pennsylvania voice representing the LGBT experience during a time of great transition in our country. View modern history through Mills' personal and unpretentious poetic lens.**

Tumbleweed

I think it's time to move on,
to go someplace unknown
where no one will recognize me
Where I can start life afresh
with a whole new cast of characters
who will see a new me
for I'll have left the old one behind

Once I've been there awhile
it will be time to move again
I have a gypsy in my soul
that keeps me rolling on
but I think it's better this way
No one can leave me when
I leave them first
There are fewer sad good byes
when there are frequent hellos

Someday I'll have to settle down
Someday I'll need some roots
One day, I'll stop my running
from love and those who love me,
from town to town and coast to coast,
and most importantly, from myself

Peruvian Son

His name is Carlos
We met at the Frat House
A perfect coda to Friday the 13th
Who'd have thought the 14th would be
so lucky?
It was a scene straight(?)
out of "South Pacific"
with love across a crowded room
God!
I'm giddy!

I smile when I think
of that beautiful
Peruvian son who
brightened my dark world!

When It Breaks

My identity
so seemingly carved in stone,
simply hardened from neglect
When it breaks
I will as well...

I feel I'm running out of time
My future
which once seemed secure
is losing its foundation
My past is crumbling away
Its cornerstones are crushed
or
simply disappear
They can't be replaced

Self-destruction has become tiresome
I want to stop
I don't know how
Besides, the habit is so familiar

...My rage
so furiously damned inside
sometimes seeps through cracks
When the levy breaks
I will as well

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book reviews

By Deborah Battisti
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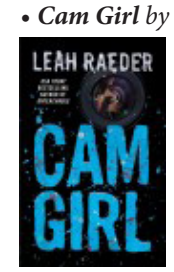
• ***Blackmail, my love: a murder mystery*** *by Katie Gilmartin - 2014*

In San Francisco in 1951, a gay private dick investigates a blackmail ring targeting lesbians and gay men. When he disappears, his sister comes to search for him, adopting his trousers and wingtips as well as his investigation. A neo-noir novel set in such legendary locations as the Black Cat Cafe, the Fillmore during its heyday as jazz capitol of the west, the Beat movement's North Beach, and the sexually complex Tenderloin, this illustrated murder mystery won the Lambda Award for Best Gay Mystery in 2015.

• ***How to greet strangers*** *by Joyce Thompson - 2013*

Once Archer Barron had grand expectations--graduating law school, donning drag to express his feminine aspects, and the love of a devoted boyfriend--but fate became cruel. HIV-positive cruel, followed by a growing involvement with an Oakland Santería priestess who promised a cure in return for devotion and a lot of cash. His lover died. His faith and spirit almost followed. Now Archer works a sorry job as a university night watchmen and volunteers at a free clinic. The walls he's built in the years since his loss are about to come crumbling down when the police discover the body of the Santeria priestess. Archer's grudge makes him a prime suspect. This new detective is black, he's spiritual, he's stunning. And he's in great danger.

• ***Cam Girl*** *by Leah Raeder - 2015*



Publishers Weekly says this sexy romantic suspense novel is "a heartbreaking picture of a young woman's struggles with identity" in a "darkly erotic new adult contemporary." Vada Bergen and Ellis Carroway are best friends and maybe more. When they are in a near-fatal car accident that takes away Vada's longtime dream of being an artist, and Ellis withdraws, Vada slips into a deep depression. As her financial situation worsens, Vada takes a job as a "cam girl," performing sexual acts for anonymous clients via webcam." When she starts to have feelings for a client, she must decide whether to pursue the connection or walk away.

Sorry Dorothy. I need less drama in my life. I'm headed to my "Home Away from Home" for fun & relaxation!
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Freedom to Marry in PA Archived

As it comes closer to ending operations February 29, Freedom to Marry today launched a new website that will serve as a central resource for telling the story of the marriage movement while providing lessons and materials for other organizations, movements, and causes.

Pennsylvania is noted in the web site www.freedomtomarry.org.

The website is part of Freedom to Marry's strategic wind-down, which also includes an oral history project hosted at UC-Berkeley, the donation of archives to Yale University, and an upcoming film by Eyepop Productions to be completed in spring 2016.

"With the fulfillment of Freedom to Marry's singular goal of winning marriage nationwide, we knew we had a responsibility to compile, document, and archive the history and resources, tell the story, and share the lessons of the movement, strategy, and campaign that brought about this historic transformation and triumph," said Evan Wolfson, founder and president of Freedom to Marry. "Every one of our staffers who was a part of the win spent time organizing archives and writing in-depth analyses of the numerous components of the campaign. These resources, and many more, will be on the new enduring Freedom to Marry legacy website. "

A long-form narrative history of the most significant milestones in the marriage movement that tell the story of how the marriage battle was won.

The web site lists -

• resources on best practices for winning legislative, ballot, court victories, and how those types of campaigns differ

• detailed chronology of the work in each state toward winning the freedom to marry

• the national strategy – what Freedom to Marry called the Roadmap to Victory – that guided the movement and led to the climactic Supreme Court rulings in 2013 and 2015

• analysis of the marriage movement's messaging development, messenger recruitment, and most effective ads

• powerful personal stories from the many voices who were part of the movement that achieved the profound change of hearts and minds

In addition to the new permanent website, Freedom to Marry has donated its collection of documents, media, and electronic files to Yale University, to be made accessible to research historians and journalists starting this summer in the Manuscripts & Archives division. The records document the history, structure, and activities of Freedom to Marry.

The Seattle Lesbian in Times Square

NASDAQ contacted *The Seattle Lesbian* founder Sarah Toce and the two struck up a news partnership that landed *The Seattle Lesbian* in the middle of Times Square. "Literally, they asked if we would be a news partner and we said yes...and then saw this!, Toce tells *Central Voice*.

Pope Francis and LGBT People of Faith Clarify Positions

Expanding his 2013 remarks about gays, Pope Francis in an interview with Italian journalist Andrea Tornielli was asked how he might act as a confessor to a gay person. This question comes just a few years after his "who am I to judge?"remarks thought by that the Vatican is heading toward a softer stance on gays. The reply appears in his new book The Name of God is Mercy.

The pope says:

"On that occasion I said this: If a person is gay and seeks out the Lord and is willing, who am I to judge that person? I was paraphrasing by heart the Catechism of the Catholic Church where it says that these people should be treated with delicacy and not be marginalized."

"I am glad that we are talking about 'homosexual people' because before all else comes the individual person, in his wholeness and dignity, and people should not be defined only by their sexual tendencies: let us not forget that God loves all his creatures and we are destined to receive his infinite love."

"I prefer that homosexuals come to confession, that they stay close to the Lord, and that we pray all together. You can advise them to pray, show goodwill, show them the way, and accompany them along it."

One observer said, "Doesn't this sound very similar to the 'love the sinner, hate the sin' line we've heard from evangelical Christians for years?

Meanwhile, LGBT people of faith remain committed to their various religious belief systems.

Eliel Cruz, Religion News Service, has created photo series based on This Is What It Means To Be #FaithfullyLGBT -

LGBT community center coalition

By Louie Marven
Executive Director

Gay-Straight Alliance Summit

On March 31, April 1, and April 2, the LGBT Center will present the 9th annual Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) Leadership Summit at Dickinson College. This unique conference for high school and college students and staff is a collaborative effort with Planned Parenthood Keystone and Dickinson College's Office of LGBTQ Services.

For the first time in its history, the event will take place over a three-day period. The first four years, the event was a one-day event, and during the last four it has taken place over two days, one for high school students and staff, and one for college students and staff. The attendance keeps growing, and we have been very fortunate to have maxed out our space. This year, high school student groups will choose between Thursday, March 31 and Friday, April 1. When the attendance for one of those dates reaches 250, it will be full, and high school groups must select the remaining date. College students will participate on Saturday, April 2.

The schedule for each day of the conference includes a keynote address, three workshops sessions during which participants choose one of four or five options each, lunch, and networking.

A number of central Pennsylvania's LGBT organizations are sending representatives to present workshops. Alder Health Services' Candace Sillers will present workshops about the impact that smoking has on LGBT people, and Alder Health Services' Dr. Jarrett Sell and Liz Leen will offer workshops on addressing health care needs of the LGBT communities more broadly. Pennsylvania Youth Congress's Jason Landau Goodman will present on trans youth policy and advocacy, TransCentralPA's Joanne Carroll will present on intersections between LGBT and faith communities, and Planned Parenthood Keystone's Kelly Gainor will present on how to navigate the marketplace in light of trying to support LGBT-friendly businesses.

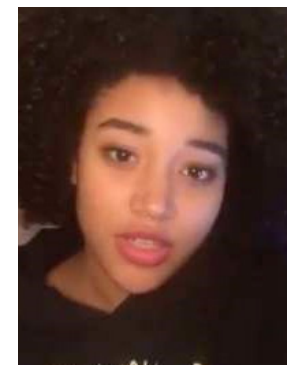
Center board members Shaashawn Dial-Snowden and Trum Simmons will also offer workshops – a queer people of color panel discussion and a workshop on the benefits and drawbacks of labels, respectively – and Dickinson College's Malinda Triller Doran will give participants and opportunity to explore LGBTQQIA archives through the LGBT Center of Central PA History Project, which is housed in the Dickinson College Archives and Special Collections.

College student participants will have an opportunity to participate in a story that will appear in Central Voice, which is a follow up on previous Central Voice coverage on how various generations of LGBT individuals use language and labels, and what LGBT people of various ages can learn from each other. This is just a snapshot of the activities being offered throughout the Summit.

The GSA Leadership Summit is an opportunity for students and professionals to participate in workshops designed to help everyone better understand and advocate for LGBTQA youth in central PA and beyond. The GSA Leadership Summit is the only event of its kind in central PA, where LGBTQA students and professionals have day-long safe spaces to network, learn new skills, and work toward making central Pennsylvania a more welcoming place for all people.

The mission of the LGBT Center of Central PA is to create common ground for the LGBT community and allies in central Pennsylvania by providing services through educational, cultural, and community activities that foster wholeness.

Actress-teen activist Amandla Stenberg Out as Bisexual



The former Hunger Games star and Teen Vogue cover model took over the magazine's Snapchat account to deliver a series of candid video messages while wearing a "Black Girls are Magic" sweater.

She first thanked the magazine for providing representation for other black girls, expressing how "deeply bruising" it is to "fight against your identity and to mold yourself into shapes that you just shouldn't be in."

"As someone who identifies as a black, bisexual woman, I've been through it," she says.

"I definitely believe in the concept of rebellion through selfhood and rebellion just by embracing your true identity, no matter what you're being told," she says. "Here I am, being myself and it's hard and vulnerable and it's definitely a process, but I'm learning and I'm growing."

She ended the Snapchat takeover by encouraging viewers to demand more representation for all kinds of women and to speak out against misogyny.

The Man Who Buried Them Remembers

Friend of *Central Voice* Mark King says "Our difficult AIDS history must be chronicled and preserved. When I heard of this gay man and his singular contribution, I knew I had to tell his story. It demands to be heard." Below is King's essay *The Man Who Buried Them Remembers.*

AIDS HISTORY BY MARK KING

When he conducted the funerals, Tom Bonderenko tells me, he always wore his priestly garments and white stole. Even when no one showed up for the graveside service.

"It was important to show dignity and respect," Tom says. He taps the coffee cup in his lap nervously. "I'm sorry," he says. He clears his throat but it doesn't keep his eyes from welling up. "No one has asked me about this in a really long time."

We are sitting in his office at Moveable Feast, the Baltimore meal delivery agency for those with life-threatening illnesses, where Tom has served as director for the last eight years. His office is spacious and cheerful, but this conversation is a difficult one. He had discreetly closed his office door behind me when I arrived.

When Moveable Feast was founded in 1989 to deliver meals to home-bound AIDS patients, Tom was engaged in a different, more literal ministry to the disenfranchised. He was a priest staffing a homeless shelter for Catholic Charities of Baltimore. It was there he met someone with AIDS for the first time.

"A young man came to the door of the emergency shelter, sometime in 1987," he says. "He was covered in black marks. Lesions, you know. Everywhere. He said he needed to clean up before his first doctor appointment the next day."

Tom had grown up in New York City, and as a gay man he had known people who died very suddenly, as far back as the early 1980's. But he had never stood face to face with someone so ill with the dreaded disease.

I couldn't help but ask Tom how he felt, meeting that person.

Tom stares out his office window, and his eyes are so beautiful, romantically blue, framed with creases of worry. The eyes of a priest. He turns back to me with an answer. "Here was a young man who was going to find out from a doctor the next day that he had AIDS," he manages. He starts tapping his coffee cup again, and he bows his head reverently. "And he was about to be told that he was going to die."

Tom never saw the young man again.

People with AIDS became more common at the shelter before long. Tom got to know the regulars, and they began to ask him to perform their funeral services.

"They just wanted to know they would be buried," he says quietly. "They didn't want or need anything religious. Most of them were estranged from their families, drug abuse, that sort of thing. I think they were embarrassed to reach out to relatives. Sometimes, when they died we would find a member of the family to come, but usually it was just me and the departed at the gravesite."

The burials were performed at unmarked graves in a lonely section of Baltimore Cemetery. The caskets were as charity required, simple wooden boxes, and they always contained a body. The funeral home would not cremate someone who died from AIDS because they were afraid of poisoning the air.

"I would always conduct the service out loud," says Tom, now sharing the sacred details. "I would speak about the departed, and say what I knew of them, about where they were from. And then I would ask if anyone present had been harmed by the departed…"

I imagined Tom, in his vestments and alone in a forgotten graveyard, asking intimate questions out loud to the grass and the trees and the disinterested silence. "I would say that if the departed had harmed anyone," he goes on, "for that person to please forgive them." Tom's voice falters. "And then I would ask the departed to forgive, too. I would tell them, 'you're on the other side now. Let it go.'"

Tom's office becomes very still. I feel as if I'm holding my breath.

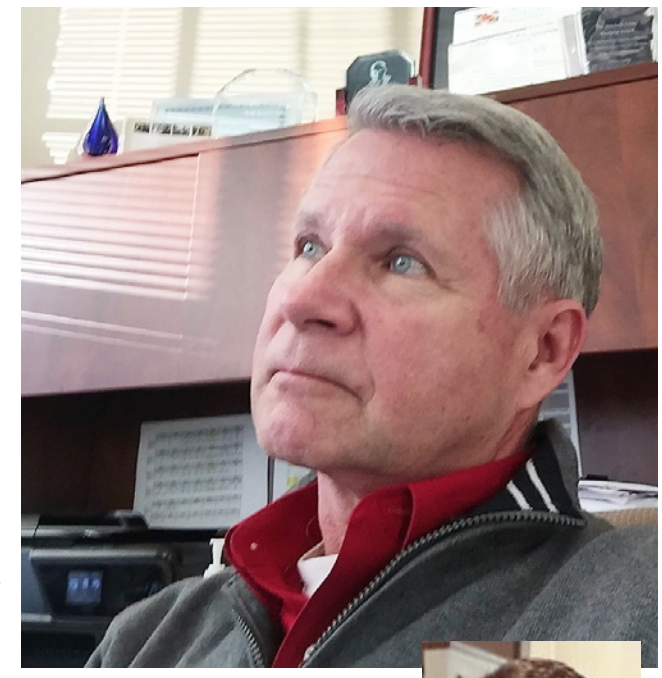
"I think they just didn't want to be alone," Tom says, and now he looks at me without regard for his tears. "We don't do this alone."

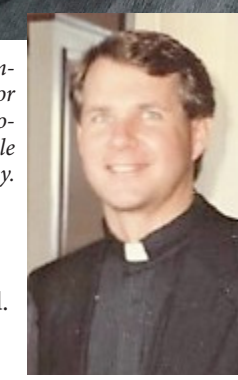
Because of you, I think to myself. They weren't alone because of you, Tom.

"I'm so sorry," he says, again, wiping his face. "I haven't talked about this in so long." He considers the faraway scene he has conjured, his graveside questions to no one, and then adds, "It was the most important, meaningful thing I have ever done."

I wonder aloud if the experience bolstered his religious faith or challenged it instead. He looks surprised by the question. "Well," he answers after a moment, "I believe it strengthened my faith. Yes." I want very much to believe him.

Tom left Catholic Charities, and the priesthood, not long after he conducted the last of his burials for the homeless. A decade later he joined Moveable Feast and embraced its mission to provide sustenance for people in need, people like those to whom he once ministered.





As a young priest in the 80s, Tom Bonderenko (right) performed burials for homeless people who died from AIDS. Today, Tom (above) is director of Moveable Feast, a Baltimore meal delivery agency.

Tom's fellow staff members know little about his life a generation ago. Most of them aren't aware of the aching memories beneath the calm surface of their sensitive and capable boss. They may not fully understand why Tom leaves the office once a month to distribute food personally to homebound clients.

But they will tell you that when Tom Bonderenko returns from those deliveries, he always has tears in his eyes.

(I was struck when Tom said to me, "No one has asked me about this in a really long time," because there are so many more stories out there for the asking. We only have to reach out. I hope you take any opportunity to have a conversation with someone "who was there." This history must be chronicled and preserved. -Mark)

God by Pictures & Numbers

By Central Voice

Although historically organized religion has been a deep well of discrimination against the LGBT community, there are many gay individuals who are committed to faith communities.

And in more recent history, some religious organizations, and religiously unaffiliated Americans, have evolved into welcoming congregations.

The Public Religion Research Institute in a recent report, "A Shifting Landscape" finds:

• Support for marriage equality - Religiously unaffiliated Americans (73%), white mainline Protestants (62%), white Catholics (58%), and Hispanic Catholics (56%) all favor allowing gay and lesbian couples to marry.

• A majority (83%) of Jewish Americans also favor legalizing same-sex marriage.

• Hispanic Protestants are divided; 46% favor allowing gay and lesbian couples to legally marry and 49% oppose.

• By contrast, nearly 7-in-10 (69%) white evangelical Protestants and nearly 6-in-10 (59%) black Protestants oppose same-sex marriage.

• Only 27% of white evangelical Protestants and 35% of black Protestants support same-sex marriage.

• Nearly 6-in-10 (59%) black Millennials say gay and lesbian people should be allowed to legally marry (79% favor across race), compared to only 39% of black Americans overall.

• White evangelical Protestant Millennials are more than twice as likely to favor same- sex marriage as the oldest generation of white evangelical Protestants (43% vs. 19%).

The same survey did show disparities in terms of perception of whether sexual orientation was an inherent (born with) trait or acquired by environment - 44% overall say born with; 51% Hispanic Catholics; 30% Hispanic Protestant; 25% white Evangelicals; 19% Black Protestant.

Can gay and lesbian couples be good parents?

Yes: 68% all respondents; 70% white; 65% Hispanic; 60% Black.

The survey also cites very high support for employment non-discrimination protections with only minimal differences based on race.

Emma Robins
Bi/Gray-Asexual
• Huguenot/Mennonite
#faithfullyLGBT
"God can be a safe space for you when you can't be for yourself, or when the world outside isn't.
Our God is the God of the marginalized, and if we refuse to hear and see those people, those places, then we're not really seeing God in God's entirety.
[Knowing] that could go a long ways towards healing and building bridges."

Source: The Public Religion Research Institute

MCC column

By Rev. Lori Rivera, Pastor
MCC of the Spirit

Is it spring yet?

We are funny people.

In summer we say we can't wait until fall when the leaves start to change color and the air gets cooler.

In winter we say we can't wait until summer and get rid of the cold air.

We seem to always be looking forward to the next best thing whether it is the weather, the next phone release or latest electronic "toy."

We often spend so much time looking forward that we don't see what is right in front of our eyes.

Did you get a chance to look at the snow that fell during the blizzard in late January? The flakes were different sizes throughout the day. The snow drifts changed shape over the weekend as new snow fell and as the wind pushed the snow around. It was quite pretty as it first piled up before the snow plows spread the sand and dirt.

When it first fell and I was out shoveling out my car that snow was very soft and within a few days the top layer had "crusted" over and was hard and crunched under my steps.

Looking back instead of ahead reminds me to do as we all hear, "take time to smell the roses." This is one reason that I am so appreciative of taking a Sabbath day. This is a time when I slow down and "smell the roses" or look at what is around me.

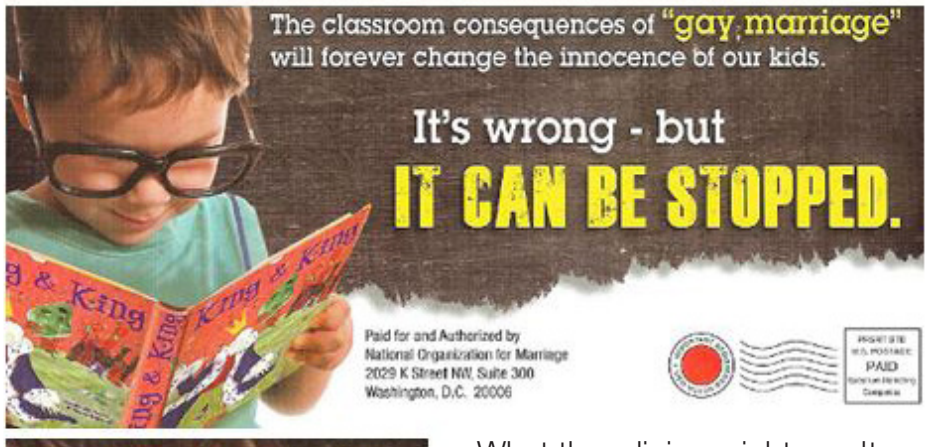
Now I will admit, my Sabbath day is not always Sunday, since as a pastor I work on Sunday and sometimes my Sabbath day isn't a whole day. But I have learned that for my physical well-being and spiritual well-being, I need some time each week to just slow down, breathe deep and look around.

My Sabbath time has many different looks.

Sometimes my Sabbath is having a quiet dinner with my wife, sometimes it's reading a "fun" book that has nothing to do with church or school, sometimes it is letting my mind wonder as I look out the window at nature and sometimes it is a quiet time to think about God.

May your Sabbath be a time of rest and peace!

Scared Stupid...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What the religious right won't tell you about their victories in gay marriage referendums across the country is that they were less about "protecting the scred institution of marriage: and more about scaring voters into thinking that gays were "coming for" their children.

Source: Holy Bullies and Headless Monsters Blogspot - holybulliesandheadlessmonsters.blogspot.com

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making sense of life

By Dr. Terry Drew Karanen

A World That Works for Everyone

Can you imagine living in a world that works for everyone? Wow – you may be thinking – where the heck did THAT come from! Actually, it's a theme that my Foundation and nearly two hundred other spiritual communities worldwide will be exploring throughout this entire year.

When this idea first came to light many started asking questions that more than often began with, "But what about…?" It's an easy question to ask. Why? Because the concept of living in harmony with others in a world containing so many conflicting ideologies seems impossible. This is particularly evident here in the States in a presidential election year. Talk about differences! So how could a world that works for everyone ever be possible?

We often say we want to express one thing; then we turn right around and negate that desire in the next breath. That's commonly the case when we can't figure out how we can have what we say we want. Think about the kind of planet we'd live on if the world worked for everyone. Wouldn't that be chaos?

Not really. If all people bought into the concept of a world that works for everyone, then no one would entertain desires that would harm another. That doesn't mean we can't have differences of opinion, nor does that mean we all have to live the same lifestyle. Differences can be accepted, even when we don't necessarily approve of the other person's actions.

For example, growing up in California the acts of recycling and water conservation was business-as -usual for our family. Imagine my surprise when I moved out of the state over 20 years ago and found out it was no longer the norm. I was laughed at as "one of those tree-hugging, California hippies." But today "being green" is not just commonplace – it's become downright fashionable!

The same is true with regard to the banning smoking in restaurants and other public places. There was an outcry at first, along with predictions of restaurant and bar closures. Yet today we find that not only are more areas smoke-free, but a number of smokers with whom I've spoken don't seem to mind the outcome.

These are just two examples of how something beneficial, but unheard of in the past, has enriched and improved our quality of life and that of the planet. But what about all the opposing religious, cultural or political ideologies? How can we expect those factions to come around to an era of cooperation, understanding and acceptance?

Think of the discrimination GLBTQ communities have endured in the past – and continue to endure – at the hands of religious organizations who view us as sinners or worse; cultures that encourage negative stereotyping of who we are; or, political movements that would infringe on our civil rights. How can those wide divides be closed and the people involved integrated in a world that works for everyone?

> It starts with each of us treating one another with respect and dignity.

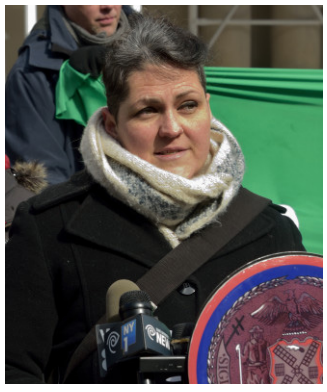
It starts with you. Yep…you. And me. And the person with whom you share your bed or home. It starts with each of us treating one another with respect and dignity. It means we are more willing to inquire than we are to judge. It means that we can't be ranting about what "they" are doing to "us," and then turn around and use derogatory remarks and stereotypical labels for other people in our own communities. We have to put on our big girl and big boy panties and admit that it is often GLBTQ people who treat other GLBTQ people quite badly. We must stop it. Now.

Sound like an inside job? It is. Pretty simple, actually. Clean up our own room before bitching about our roommate's habits. Simple, yes, but far from easy. It's much easier to complain about what "they" are doing or may do – or try to figure out how evil other groups or organizations are – than to step up to the plate and actually realize some change in our own lives. Sound interesting? There's a daily discussion of "A World That Works For Everyone," on over the Facebook® page for my Foundation.

I get it. Opening the door for someone later today out of pure kindness and without regard for a reward will not end war worldwide, reverse global warming or create a Congress that actually works together for the good of the country. Or will it? I know a conscious objector who was once asked, "What would the work look like if everyone was like you?" She just smiled. If you think about it long enough, so will you. Join me in holding the global vision of a world that works for everyone.

Terry is an author, speaker, licensed social worker and flight attendant. Read his weekly blog at Central Voice online or on his website at: blog.terrydrewkaranen.com. He is also the director of Spirit, Mind and Body Foundation (spiritmindbodyfoundation.org).

Victory Announced in 25-Year St. Patrick's Day Boycott



The 253-year old St. Patrick's Day Parade has invited an Irish LGBT group, the Lavender & Green Alliance, to march for the first time, a move that will end a 25-year boycott of the parade that began in 1991 when the Irish Lesbian and Gay Organization, a group made up largely of Irish LGBT immigrants, applied to march and was denied. (*below*) Brendan Fay, LGA chair that will march in the 2016 St. Patrick's Day Parade. (*left*) Emmaia Gelman, a member of Irish Queers, at a February press conference calling for continuation of the boycott this past St. Patrick's Day, despite the inclusion of an NBC LGBT employee group. *(Photos by Donna Aceto)*

Movement Advancement Project 2015 Report: Diversity of Paid Staff Reflects Population

The National LGBT Movement Report, published annually by Movement Advancement Project, examines revenue and expenses, fundraising and fundraising efficiency, and other indicators of financial health for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) social justice advocacy, issue, legal, research and public education organizations.

The 2015 National LGBT Movement Report provides a comprehensive snapshot of the financial health of LGBT social justice advocacy organizations. The 38 organizations examined for the 2015 report collectively represent 66% of the budgets of all LGBT social justice advocacy organizations. Among the key findings in the 2015 report:

Revenue-Expense

LGBT social justice organizations' revenues experienced a decline in revenue for the first time since the Great Recession of 2007-2008. Organizations are projecting combined 2015 expense budgets totaling $189.6 million, a 12% increase from 2014 expenses. While individual donor revenue grew 11% from 2013 to 2014, organizations lost an aggregate of $6.3 million of revenue from foundations over the same period, an 18% drop. Half of participating organizations experienced revenue declines, with the average of these organizations experiencing a shocking 20% revenue decline. Comparing participating LGBT organizations to national averages outside of the LGBT movement, revenue for the top 100 nonprofit organizations across the country increased 3.4%, compared to the 0.4% decrease in revenue for LGBT organizations.

Fundraising Efficiency

Fundraising and individual donations continue to increase, with a notable spike in individual giving, which increased 11% from 2013 to 2014 for participating LGBT nonprofits, compared to a 5.7% increase in individual giving for nonprofits nationwide. Movement groups are highly efficient in their fundraising and programming operations. On average, 81% of total expenses are dedicated to programs and services —exceeding benchmarks of the American Institute of Philanthropy and Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance.

Financial Health

General financial health remains strong. In 2014, organizations reported an average of nearly six months of available working capital, a 2% increase from 2013.

Staff and Boards

The racial and ethnic diversity of paid staff at participating organizations have similar diversity to the overall population: 38% of paid staff identify as people of color compared to 38% of the U.S. population. However, among senior staff, the percentage who are people of color was 35%. Also, 46% of all staff are women and 8% identify as transgender.

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Community Center Starting Strong

Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center recently acquired 13,000 SF building at 522 W. Maple St., in Allentown as the location for their new community center. The building will provide direct services to members of the LGBT community, including cultural, educational and health promotion programs. The organization had previously expected to move forward with the redevelopment of 1021 W. Turner St., Allentown, however significant environmental conditions were identified during due diligence and the construction cost was too high.

"This property presents a better option for our community – the physical space is better, the cost is lower and we'll be able to open sooner" said Adrian Shanker, executive director, Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center.

The 2010 U.S. Census confirms that the vibrant LGBT community in the Lehigh Valley is growing at exponential rates. Over a ten-year period, Allentown saw a 55 percent increase in same-sex couples residing in the city, Bethlehem saw a 79 percent increase and Easton by 26 percent.

Central Voice asked Shanker if there is there sufficient support to maintain the property?

"We acquired our building after significant due diligence, budgeting, fundraising and planning," shanker said, adding "Our board would not have moved forward without adequate planning to ensure that we would be able to sustain the property into the future."

"Intersectionality" is the current buzz word in community organizing circles. How does intersectionality affect the center's mission?

"Our mission of supporting the LGBT community in the Lehigh Valley requires an intersectional approach. We do our best to provide information to reach LGBT people of faith, LGBT people for whom Spanish is their primary language, LGBT people with disabilities, and LGBT people of color," Shanker explains.

In January, the new center partnered with Lehigh Valley Active Life and the Equal Rights Center to offer a free workshop on fair housing rules for older LGBT adults.

Future plans?

"We will soon be announcing new programs and exciting services for the LGBT community in our region now that we have a community center, we want to make sure our community has plenty of reasons to come and use it!" Shanker said. "The growing LGBT community brings with it a greater need for community resources, infrastructure and direct services. We need a community center to provide the programs and services our community deserves."

Awards

The center recently announced recipients of their 2016 LGBT Community Leadership Awards.

This year the organization honors:

Mark Albright, Esq. in recognition of pro-bono legal support of Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center and for his pro-bono legal support of the passage of Bethlehem's non-discrimination law in 2011.

Mary Lisicky in recognition of her leadership of the LGBT Business Council at The Chamber, and for her volunteerism and philanthropic support of Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center.

Ariel Torres in recognition of years leadership and fundraising in the Lehigh Valley drag community.

Gross McGinley, LLP in recognition of legal support of the LGBT community, early capital support of Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center, and financial support of numerous LGBT organizations in the community.

Muhlenberg Trans* Advocacy Coalition in recognition of their on-campus activism in support of visibility and safety for Trans community members at Muhlenberg College and for their partnership and volunteerism with Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center.

Individuals shown here were involved in the center's closing process. From left: Rob Ritter, Bill Thompson, Tim Brennan, Patricia Sullivan, Liz Bradbury, Ryan Kinnon, Jeff Barber, Lewis Edwards.

Women's 5K Classic in recognition of their partnership with Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center to raise awareness about gynecological cancer disparities in the LGBT community.

In addition to the honorees, fashion designer Carson Kressley, a Lehigh Valley native, is expected to join the celebration as keynote speaker.

Info: www.bradburysullivancenter.org

Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center, 522 W. Maple St., Allentown

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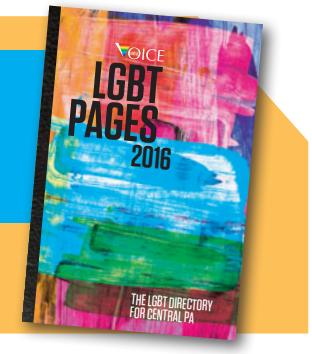

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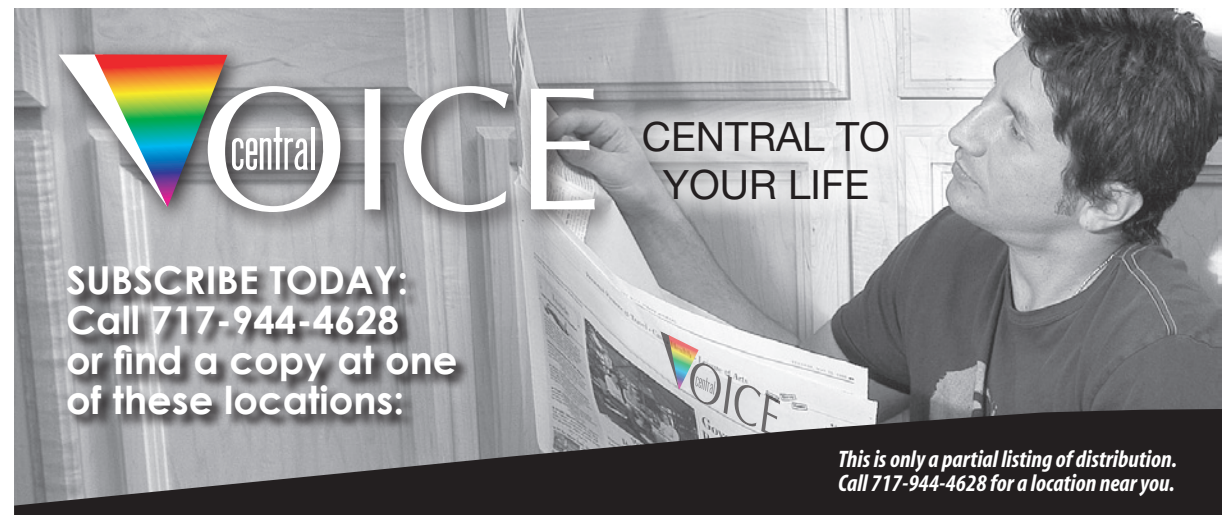

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"They" Declared Word of the Year

Singular "they," the gender-neutral pronoun, has been named the Word of the Year by a crowd of over 200 linguists at the American Dialect Society's recent annual meeting. In a landslide vote, the language experts chose singular they over "thanks, Obama," ammosexual, "on fleek," and other contenders for this annual award given to the most significant term or word in the past year.

Singular they is already a common habit in American speech. An example: "Everyone wants their cat to succeed." Earlier, the so-called proper way to say it would have been, "Everyone wants his or her cat to succeed." But what gave this word new prominence was its usefulness as a way to refer to people who don't want to be called "he" or "she."

> ...a way to refer to people who don't want to be called "he" or "she"

"We know about singular they already — we use it everyday without thinking about it, so this is bringing it to the fore in a more conscious way, and also playing into emerging ideas about gender identity," said linguist Ben Zimmer, language columnist for the Wall Street Journal.

"It encapsulates different trends that are going on in the language," Zimmer. "It's a way of identifying something that's going on in the language which ties to issues of gender identity and speaks to other ways that people are using language to express themselves and present their identity."

Anti-gay Measures

continued from page 1

Signorile employs the term "Victory Blindness" to describe the phenomenon in which we focus on the wins, mainly marriage, forgetting about the formidable pushback forming the backbone of the 107 anti-gay measures clogging state houses nationwide.

No such measures fill Pennsylvania legislative dockets. Instead a bill to add basic civil rights protections to the state's Human Relations Act is working its way through the legislative gears.

Early last month a coalition of small and large employers, academic institutions, and non-profit organizations called on General Assembly to pass the PA Fairness Act.

The act amends Pennsylvania's Human Relations Act so that sexual orientation and gender identity and expression cannot be used as the basis of discrimination. Current state law allows Pennsylvanians to be fired or denied housing and business services solely on the basis of the person being gay or transgender.

The coalition represents nearly 1,000 Pennsylvania employers employing an estimated 150,000 employees, according to the lobbying effort known as PA Competes, working hand in glove with

Equality PA to pass the proposed legislation.

Citing their support for an inclusive workplace environment and the impact it has on their ability to attract and retain quality employees, small and large employers including academic institutions and non-profit organizations have joined in support of the PA Fairness Act (HB 1510 / SB 974), according to the coalition.

"It's the employees of First Generation who have made our success and growth possible for almost 30 years," said Bill Carmody, CEO, First Generation, Allentown. "To ensure that growth continues, I am committed to providing a welcoming and dynamic work environment for our employees. The Pennsylvania Fairness Act is legislation that must pass so that, once and for all, state law prevents discrimination against our colleagues or new employees who are gay, lesbian, transgender or bisexual."

Ending discrimination, the group says, will ensure that all Pennsylvanians have equal protections in the workplace, housing and business services and will positively impact the ability of employers to attract talented employees and grow their businesses and the economy.

In 15 years, more than 70% of the national workforce will be comprised of the millennial generation. Recent polls says 74% of Pennsylvanians support the legislation as well as nine

Fortune 500 companies and more than 400 Pennsylvania small businesses. Pennsylvania's policies must support the reality of the economic marketplace, coalition materials say, and be positioned as a strong economic competitor in attracting the highly skilled millennial workforce or face the likely negative economic consequences.

The PA Fairness Act has broad bi-partisan support among more than 100 members of the General Assembly and is co-sponsored by Senators Pat Browne (R) and Larry Farnese (D) in the state Senate and Representatives Dan Frankel (D) and Tom Killion (R) in the state House of Representatives.

On the religious bills floating around nationwide, Equality PA executive director Ted Martin tells Central Voice "Freedom of religion is important; it's part of what makes America great. That's why it's already protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution. At the same time, the rule of law is also important, and we can't just create sweeping religious exemptions that encourage people to pick and choose which laws they're going to follow."

It's important to note, Martin points out, "that none of these proposals are in play here in Pennsylvania and that we not only have protections under the First Amendment, we are also protected by the PA Constitution, and the PA Religious Freedom Protection Act." (See "PA's Religious Freedom Protection Act" below.)

In contrast to religious protection acts in play nationwide, Pennsylvania is poised for action on The PA Fairness Act.

Martin recently agreed with an assessment by Human Rights Campaign president Chad Griffin who forecasts 2016 as "a pivotal time" when the LGBT community's successes after the U.S. Supreme Court ruling on marriage could continue - or face significant setbacks. Add to the political roller the fact that this year there are 5,800 state legislative seats up for grabs.

"We've never had so much at stake in any election than we have in 2016 as it relates to LGBT rights — both in terms of protecting our gains as well as having advocates both in the House and Senate as well as in the White House that will not only protect our progress and our gains, but also be champions and leaders in order for us to achieve success in the future as it relates to the Equality Act and a host of other priorities," Griffin said. The Equality Act Griffin refers to is a federal level effort to amend the Civil Rights Act to include LGBT protections.

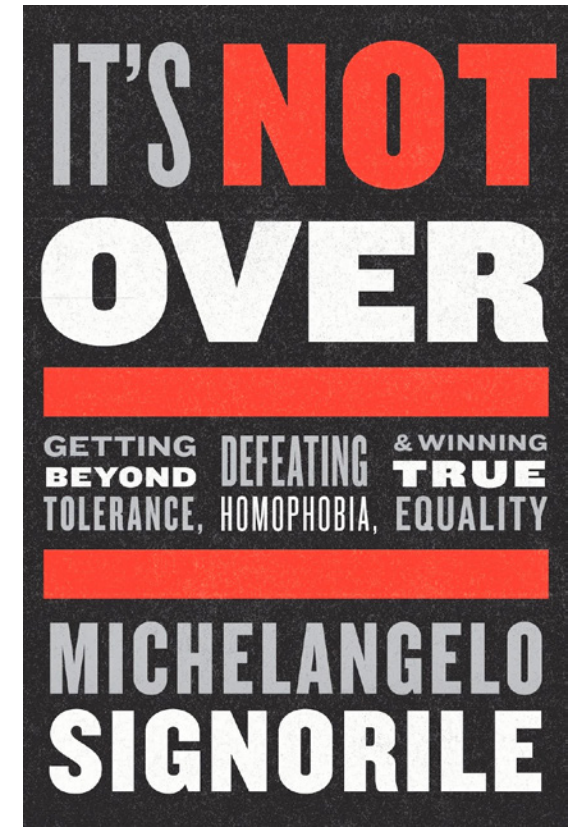
Griffin's assessment identified Pennsylvania as a state where change may occur. Martin agrees with Griffin that the Keystone State could see pro-LGBT legislation advance this year. "We do share this assessment," Martin said. "Non-discrimination is our top legislative priority and we intend to do everything we can in 2016 to see it passed."

"Poll after poll shows that Pennsylvania voters are ready to make sure that everyone is protected from discrimination, and we have legislation that has unprecedented bipartisan support. It's not surprising that we are considered the best chance for statewide change this year. Now we just need the legislature to act," Martin says.

Info: eqaualiypa.org; www.aclu.org

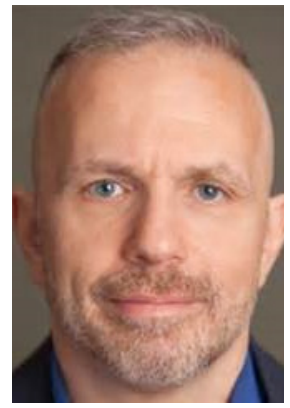
PA's Religious Freedom Protection Act

In 2002, Pennsylvania passed a Religious Freedom Protection Act which does not allow state laws that "substantially burden" a person's ability to follow his or her religious beliefs. The law only applies to individuals, churches and tax-exempt organizations who are allowed to challenge any state or local law if it "substantially burdens" their religious belief. Historically, religious freedoms laws have been crafted to keep governments from violating people's religious beliefs, not to grant entities or individuals to discriminate. In contrast to the 107 anti-gay measures moving through state legislatures combine and conflate and substantially change the definition of what represents a "substantial burden". Adding to the widening grasp of anti-gay legislation, for example, was Indiana's defeated but now resurrected law that included for-profit businesses.



SYNOPSIS:

It's Not Over



Signorile

HuffPost *Gay Voices* Editor-at-Large Michelangelo Signorile is on the front line of equality with *It's Not Over*, an in-depth look at where the queer rights movement has been and where it's going. The book serves as a reminder and warning that no one should be declaring "mission accomplished" just yet.

Essentially, Signorile says his book came together in 2009, when facts on the ground, in terms of how people experienced homophobia and transphobia, were never quite matching the celebrations in the media of the victories, which then were still baby steps compared to now.

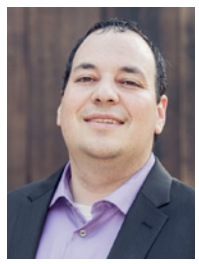
Signorile says, "It's crazy but the victories kept changing, growing, sometimes dramatically, as did the facts on the ground. But what remained constant was that there was always a disconnect between the two, in terms of what I would see or hear from my radio listeners and people online out across the country, and how the wins were celebrated in the media or among activists. And I felt it was something very troubling that needed to be fleshed out and discussed."

> ...no one should be declaring "mission accomplished" just yet

He calls what he observed "Victory Blindness," a term he uses to describe the phenomenon in which we focus on the wins, so starved for validation we allow them to blind us to the continued bigotry we face. We become enthralled, intoxicated - spellbound by even a little bit. The effect is that it obscures our reality and vision and makes us lose our gumption, not wanting to rock the boat, fearful that we'll lose what we've gained and not get what little bit we think we need, when in fact we need a lot.

Creating Change? *continued from page 1*

Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech in which King called for racial justice and economic equality for all.



Shanker

Shanker's remarks at the King anniversary stepped outside of the gay comfort zone to acknowledge issues that cross political divides. He thinks outside rigid political rules once again in discussing with *Central Voice* a recent hot spot in the lgbt movement landscape - one group shutting down another at a conference whose mission is to create change.

Here's what happened.

A controversial panel was scheduled, then cancelled, then rescheduled again only to be shut down by 200 protestors.

A reception was planned by the online magazine A Wider Bridge (AWB) that featured speakers from the Jerusalem Open House Pride and Tolerance organization (JOH). Creating Change staff had initially dropped the reception after receiving criticism from Chicago-based Gay Liberation Network and Black Lives Matter, among others, but then the venue's governing board reversed the staff's decision.

Opposing groups objected to the discussion holding that AWB and JOH were "pinkwashing," a public relations strategy whereby, in this case, Israel's record on LGBT rights is used to fend off negative perceptions arising from its treatment of the Palestinians. AWB responded to the protestors by saying there was a "strong undercurrent of anti-Semitism" in their protests.

The event was shut down by 200 protestors. Attendees from both AWB and JOH reported being fearful and unsafe. The ongoing controversy exploded on the Internet. Dialogue was shut down.

Shanker tells *Central Voice,* "There was a lot of passion on both sides. There is no monolithic political point of view among Jews," he says. "Our views go from far left all the way over to far right," he points out. In context, he means that views about how Israel treats Palestinians, including gay Palestinians, and overall political and military policies span the political spectrum. There is no consensus on these issues among American Jews or Jews worldwide.

Referring to the protestors, Shanker said, "I think everyone wanted to appear very progressive without realizing just how complicated the Israel-Jerusalem situation is."

Some observers present at the event say many of ther 200 protestors did not fully understand the implications of their messaging. For example, "From the river to the sea Palestine will be Free" is often interpreted "as death to Israel rather than freedom for everyone within that geographic space," Shanker points out.

"I am not opposed to direct action or getting across your point of view," Shanker clarifies. But rather than cancel and/or protest a message with which you disagree "we can get our opposing points of view across within the context of a dialogue, not by closing off communication but by creating opportunities to talk to one another."

One aspect of the program lost in the clamor is that Jerusalem Open House, that city's LGBT community center, did not get a chance to talk about the stabbing of six people at last year's Jerusalem pride event July 29, reported by CV last Fall (Sept-Oct 2015).

"We fight for LGBT-specific causes, such as marriage equality and non-discrimination, but many of us who advocate for LGBT equality also realize that we don't advocate in a vacuum, that the LGBT community is deeply affected by other progressive issues," Shanker says.

The LGBT community "needs to stand for voting rights, immigration reform, reproductive choice and comprehensive sex education in public schools," he argues. "These issues effect all of us."

Next year's Creating Change will be held in Philadelphia.

6 STABBED AT JERUSALEM PRIDE

YISHAI SCHLISSEL REACHING FOR HIS KNIFE

As reported by Central Voice (Sept-Oct 2015), an ultra-Orthodox man armed with a knife ran amok during Jerusalem's July 29 gay pride march, stabbing six people, one woman seriously. Yishai Schlissel had recently been released from prison after serving 10 years for stabbing three people at a gay pride parade in 2005, police said. Eyewitnesses said the alleged attacker had hidden himself in a supermarket and waited for the march to arrive. They described seeing Schlissel run screaming through the crowd, stabbing people at random before being overpowered by police

Downstream Consequences *continued from page 1*

assault," explains Nancy (a ficticious name). "If employers check magisterial records they will find the information. The incident is listed there until this day," she tells Central Voice.

The "criminal record for life" part of the criminal justice system is what local State Rep. Patty Kim, and others, wanted to change. They have. Language that would allow expungement in certain situations, written by Kim, and State Rep. Jordan Harris, has passed the House of Representatives as part of an amended Senate bill that Governor Tom Wolf signed.

"I am thrilled," Kim said. "There are too many cases in which someone makes a mistake when they're young and it wreaks havoc on their life for years to come. We need to make record expungement more accessible because if we don't reform the current system, a completed sentence becomes an indefinite sentence."

As included in the final bill, Kim and Harris' language allow a person convicted of a third- or second-degree misdemeanor, if at least 10 years have passed since they completed their sentence, to request the opportunity to appear before a judge and ask for an order for limited access of their criminal record. Criminal justice and government agencies would not be subject to the order for limited access, and they would still be able to see a person's entire criminal record information.

All violent offenses punishable by imprisonment of more than two years, and many others of a serious nature, would be prohibited from being subject to an order for limited access under the bill.

The problem for Nancy, a licensed financial planner, is that any potential client or current client can look up her criminal record - the Internet is clogged with such search engines - which could cause her to lose accounts.

"It's never over," Nancy says with exasperation.

"And when you make it your goal to expunge your record you are thrown into a confusing set of rules that no one can quite explain. There are so many hoops to jump through," she says.

Worse yet, Nancy was never actually found guilty of a crime.

"I was charged in 2010 with simple assault means, that I must have my 'record expunged." She is recalling a time in her life when she faced personal challenges from all sides. "I was 31 years old and received a diagnosis of breast cancer," Nancy explains. She underwent chemotherapy and radiation.

"Having survived cancer I learned in the process that my relationship with my husband was not what I needed," sharing that she felt her husband's reaction to her crisis left her feeling unfulfilled. "He did his very best but I hoped for him to be my best friend and he wasn't."

As Nancy's health recovered and her marital relationship unraveled, "my decision to seek a separation and eventually begin divorce proceedings was not received well by my husband." After many heated arguments, Nancy found herself staying overnight in Dauphin County Prison. She was eventually evicted by her husband from a home she owned before they were married.

Now 37, Nancy has a successful career as a financial planner but faces obstacles that under Pennsylvania's current criminal record keeping system keeps someone like her going around in circles.

"When I apply for a job I want to be honest and report that I was charged with simple assault," Nancy explains. "If employers check magisterial records they will find the information. The incident is listed there until this day," she says.

> I understand what it is like to not have the protection you need to live your life to the fullest.

Passionate about the problem addressed by the legislation, Nancy testified before a legislative oversight committee collecting examples of how difficult expungement procedures affect individuals.

"I thought the committee was both empathetic and sympathetic. It was the first time I had spoken publicly about my own situation," Nancy says.

Remembering her committee testimony prompted Nancy to remark, "That's why I am supportive of the LGBT community. I understand what it is like to not have the protection you need to live your life to the fullest."

Funding Available for Farmers Transitioning to Organic Production

Farmers considering the transition to organic production can apply for funding to help ensure a smooth process through the Organic Transition Assistance Program, the newest offering in the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's expanding suite of economic development assistance for farms and agribusinesses.

The program is available to for-profit enterprises in non-organic agricultural production or in processing agricultural products that are not currently certified organic. A unique transition team will be specially tailored for each producer to address their particular needs. As part of the process, up to $1,500 will be reimbursed for costs associated with the transition process.

Deputy Secretary for Market and Economic Development Hannah Smith-Brubaker recently announced the program at a Growing Pennsylvania's Organic Farms Conference.

Applications will be available in spring 2016. Funding reimbursement periods will last for 12 months for each applicant.

Info: www.PAgrows.com

Environmental Protection Launches Website, Social Media Accounts

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has launched its updated website and social media accounts making the agency more accessible for citizens, businesses, and the regulated community. The updated website - www.dep.pa.gov - is mobile-adaptive.

"DEP's new website will highlight, in a much more transparent and accessible manner, the important work we do every day to protect Pennsylvanians' air, water, land, and public health," said Secretary Quigley. "I encourage everyone to visit the website to learn more about how we are fulfilling that mission."

The website is organized into four distinct tabs:

The "Citizens" tab is a new section devoted to consumer information relevant to Pennsylvanians' lives.

The "Businesses" tab holds traditional agency content migrated from our previous website.

The "Public Participation" tab has information about public meetings; public comments, including the new eComment system; and DEP's more than 30 advisory committees.

The "Data & Tools" tab gives users access to dozens of reports and data sheets, including oil and gas compliance reports.

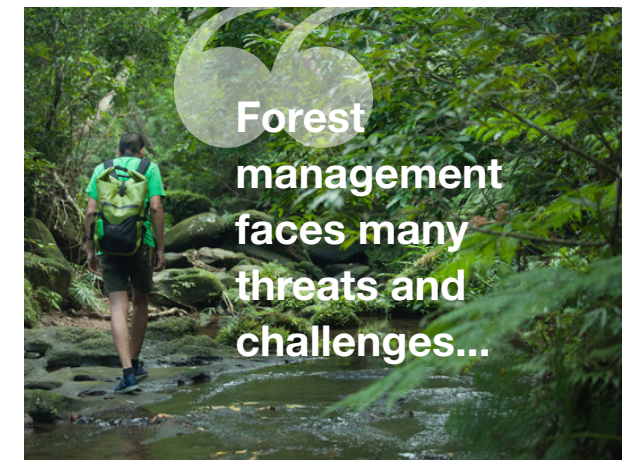
Review Hails Management of PA's State Forests

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn today released results of an independent review team's annual study of state forestlands, noting its findings continue to affirm Bureau of Forestry efforts to conserve these resources through sound management.

"Once again our state forests were deemed 'well-managed' in an official certification reflecting the pride we take in overseeing our state forest system for many values and uses, while maintaining its long-term health and viability," Dunn said. "Auditors were very pleased with our management and dedication of staff, and I extend thanks to districts involved in this year's audit for another job well done."

For the 17th consecutive year, since 1998 when a team of scientists first began reviewing management of the 2.2 million acres of state forestlands, researchers applauded Pennsylvania's commitment to its forests, and exemplary practices and innovation in managing forest resources.

"Forest management faces many threats and challenges, including fragmentation and disturbance, invasive plants, destructive exotic insects and challenges with regeneration," noted Dunn. "The certification process shows we are doing everything we can to improve our management plans and practices. More importantly, it helps us identify areas we can improve to ensure our forests are well-managed and in line with public expectations."



Ending Sept. 2, the three-day Annual Surveillance Audit was conducted by Scientific Certification Systems (SCS), an Emeryville, Calif.-based certification body accredited by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) to conduct forest management and resource evaluations.

An SCS project team consisting of two foresters specializing in wildlife biology, ecology, forestry management and socio-economic issues toured Rothrock, Bald Eagle, Weiser, and Pinchot state forest districts. They met with DCNR staff, scoring forests on timber-resource sustainability, forest-ecosystem maintenance, financial and socioeconomic considerations and other FSC indicators.

The audit team visited timber sales, recreational trailheads, research areas and a mine reclamation area. Auditors sought district input on effects of energy extraction; deer impact in the forests; forest regeneration; and bureau public input and education efforts. Their study focused on public involvement; timber harvests; chemical use; landscape considerations in timber sales; soil, wildlife and other ecological safeguards; and use of non-native species.

After evaluating sites and bureau policies and guidelines for conformance with standards for sustainable forest management, the auditors issued the bureau no Corrective Action Requests. Specifically, SCS applauded the Bureau of Forestry for:

The districts' strong working relationships with external agencies; regional knowledge exhibited by their managers; and their ability to work closely with bureau headquarters in Harrisburg;

- Demonstrated ability and willingness to work with a core of well-trained, experienced loggers;
- A strong, active prescribed wildfire program;
- Its routine surveys for rare, threatened and endangered species;
- Clear vision for incorporating forest data into geographic information system for planning.

"In each of the four districts studied and at many sites visited, auditors also looked at the overall condition of our forests, roads, trails and infrastructure," said Dunn. "Every bureau employee should feel proud of the work they have done to help us maintain this high standard."

The audits are designed to evaluate the ecological, economic and social performance of the Bureau of Forestry according to forest management guidelines established by the Forest Stewardship Council. The council was formed in 1993 by environmental, social and forest-products industry representatives to establish guidelines for sustainable forest-management practices.

Certification assures consumers that wood products from the state's public forests come from a sustainable, well-managed system, which helps Pennsylvania to compete in the growing niche consumer market for "green" label wood products.

Copies of state forest evaluations can be found at www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/stateforestmanagemndex.htm.

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